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Eva Le Gallienne's
CIVIC REPERTORY PLAYS



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EVA LE GALLIENNE

Eva Le Gallienne's
CIVIC REPERTORY PLAYS

With
An Introduction and Direction Notes

By
MISS LE GALLIENNE

Hedda Gabler *Ibsen*
La Locandiera *Goldoni*
2 x 2=5 *Wied*
Three Sisters *Chekhov*



NEW YORK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	<i>Eva Le Gallienne</i> ix
HEDDA GABLER	<i>Henrik Ibsen</i> 5
LA LOCANDIERA	<i>Carlo Goldoni</i> 101
$2 \times 2 = 5$	<i>Gustav Wied</i> 173
THREE SISTERS	<i>Anton Chekhov</i> 251

Biographical notes of dramatists represented.

Complete stage directions and character
interpretations by Miss Le Gallienne

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Eva Le Gallienne	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Scene from HEDDA GABLER	5
Scene from LA LOCANDIERA	101
Scene from $2 \times 2 = 5$	173
Scene from THREE SISTERS	251

INTRODUCTION

It is hard for me to connect my personal career with the Civic Repertory Theatre. I have always felt so impersonally about my work, have always looked at it coldly, as from a distance; and yet I suppose that subconsciously it must be closely allied with me and with my early upbringing. I would like, in speaking of my early environment and education, to say a word about my mother—whose vision and broad outlook upon life were vastly important in procuring for me the sort of education most useful in the work that lay before me. Thanks to her I became at an early age familiar with the great literature, music, painting, sculpture of the world—in short, with the things that go to make up that great synthesis of knowledge and beauty: the theatre. She never impressed her ideas or tastes upon me, but merely indicated to me things that might prove interesting and stimulating. She opened doors for me—and left me alone to explore what lay behind them. She treated me always as a mental equal, discussed my ideas, allowed me to have my own opinions, even if she didn't always agree with them. We lived in Europe—mostly in Paris, with journeys to Copenhagen (where my mother was born), Germany and England. The cultural facilities of Europe, in spite of all that we Americans may say, are infinitely superior in many ways to those of this country. There Art is not treated as an outsider, but is cherished and loved as a necessary element in the adventure of living. One becomes accustomed from childhood to looking upon and appreciating beauty, simply and without selfconsciousness.

I went to school in Paris, to the *Collège Sévigné*. This college is non-sectarian, non-partisan, "non" anything that implies restriction in ideas or in learning. As in most educational institutions in Continental Europe, it is in close touch with and uses as part of its curriculum, such educational centers as the museums of art, the musical institutions and the State Theatres: The *Comédie Française* and the *Odéon*. In Copenhagen, the Royal

Theatre fills a similar place, and it is, of course, common knowledge that no town of importance in continental Europe is without its repertory theatre, providing the people with the great plays of the world at nominal prices.

I started work in the theatre at fourteen years of age. When I was sixteen I came to this country. In those days I was chiefly concerned with being a "great actress." I dreamed of becoming a star, having my name in electric lights and making lots of money!

I naturally went through all the traditional grind and hardships and disappointments, and eventually succeeded in gaining a little recognition in a play of Arthur Richman's "Not So Long Ago," a charming comedy of New York in the '70's. This play ran for two seasons. Then "Liliom" came along and was equally successful. At first I was happy, in a hitherto unknown security; that is, I knew that I could pay my rent and live in moderate comfort. Then I began to be restless. Was that all? Surely there must be something else? I began to look about me. I realized that I knew little or nothing as an actress, and I also knew that to learn one must keep working at top-speed. The mere fact of playing the same play, no matter how fine, over and over again for a period of months, running into years, did not provide sufficient material for maximum development. Yet everyone did it and nearly everyone seemed satisfied. I met a kindred spirit, equally restless, equally groping: Clare Eames. We decided to put on some special matinees of plays not usually given. We chose Maeterlinck's beautiful "Aglavaine and Selysette." It was given for two performances at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, shockingly bad performances, but we were happy and learned a lot at the expense of a very sparse audience. I thought then, watching Clare Eames at rehearsal, that either she would be the greatest actress in America, or the world's worst—heaven knows what she thought about me—but now I know, in view of her amazing development, her extraordinary performances in "Lucky Sam McCarver," "Ned McCobb's Daughter," "Hedda Gabler" and other roles, that my first hunch was right and that she is definitely on the way to being an internationally great artist in the theatre.

Of course after "Aglavaine and Selysette" there was no more

money available and our matinees came to an end. I played "Liliom" for another season on the road, and then went into "The Swan," another Molnar play, equally successful.

From then on I became a perpetual nuisance to my manager and the rest of the company. I was always agitating for more work, for special matinees. At the Cort Theatre, where we were playing the "Swan," I gave some matinees of Hauptmann's "Hannele." This was my first venture in directing—I chose a nice easy play to begin on! Fortunately Mr. Rathbone and others in the "Swan" company gave me the most generous and valuable coöperation, to say nothing of the stage-crew at the Cort, who were simply angelic and did much toward making the production possible. These matinees were well received and only lost half the money invested in them—quite a triumph!

Gilbert Miller, the producer of the "Swan," was charmingly patient and understanding and gave his consent to my playing a few matinees in French with Mme. Simone in "La Vierge Folle." So I laboriously collected experience, and gradually the idea of repertory grew in my mind until it became my great aim to see such a theatre established in New York or somewhere in the United States.

My first actual steps toward the practical establishment of such a theatre, was the production on my own, of Ibsen's "The Master Builder." I had taken this play to several managers and their verdict had been overwhelmingly against it; they felt that it was too difficult a play for the general public to patronize. I could never understand why the public of America should be rated below the public of Germany, for instance, in intelligence—and if it were true that they *were* inferior, I sensed that the fault did not fundamentally lie with the public but with the Powers who provided them with entertainment.

The Theatre Guild has certainly proved by their splendid work that there is a public for the finer plays. The people will enjoy good things if they are at hand, just as well and more than they will enjoy trash. The point is that the good things must be accessible to them. I found that "The Master Builder" and later my performances of "John Gabriel Borkman" would play to standing room only, even at 10:30 A. M. at \$1.50 *top price*.

It is true of this country as of any other, that the real intelligentsia is not necessarily composed of the wealthy, but on the contrary is more often found among the people of strictly moderate means, who cannot afford \$4.40, or even \$2.50 a ticket.

"The Master Builder" and "John Gabriel Borkman" played in New York for twelve weeks and then being unable to find another theatre, I took them on the road from February to June.

It was while on this tour with the Ibsen plays that I drew up definite plans for the Civic Repertory Theatre. In Cincinnati, when these plans had fully crystallized, I called the company together and told them of my plan, asking which of them were interested and would stand by me in carrying it out. The idea was greeted with wonderful enthusiasm and these actors: Egon Brecher, Sayre Crawley, Harold Moulton, Beatrice De Neergaard, Beatrice Terry, Sydney Machat and Ruth Wilton, formed the nucleus of the Civic Repertory Theatre Permanent Company, which now includes about thirty or more people.

The next step was to find a suitable theatre. The Broadway theatres proved impractical, as it was against their policy to allow me to play at \$1.50 top price—and the idea of *popular prices* was the crux of the whole matter to me. We were lucky enough to secure the old 14th Street Theatre which was built in 1866, and opened on May 26th of that year. The minute I went into the funny old auditorium, I loved it. Here was a *real* theatre, full of tradition, intimate, yet with a fairly large capacity. The old peanut gallery was still there with its wooden benches. Here Ada Rehan, Modjeska, Mrs. Fiske, and many others, had played. The stage of magnificent size was ideal for repertory. There was room on the premises to build and paint scenery, if necessary, room for wardrobes and sewing rooms, and offices; and, strangely enough, even the actors had not been completely neglected. The dressing rooms, though not palatial, were as good as many in the new theatres up-town (which I grant you is not saying much for them). In short, there was room to breathe—room to *work*.

I had already worked out the plays for the first season. There were to be eight in the repertoire, including the two

Ibsen plays we had already produced. They were as follows:

Benavente's "Saturday Night"

Chekhov's "Three Sisters"

Goldoni's "La Locandiera"

Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night"

Sierra's "Cradle Song"

Glaspell's "Inheritors"

Ibsen's "Master Builder" and "John Gabriel Borkman"

I was most anxious to live up immediately to our announcement of playing "repertory." There is much confusion about just what "repertory" means. Some people think that a Stock Company is repertory, that is to say, a theatre presenting a new play each week, which is each week discarded. Others think that the fact of producing four plays a season and alternating them weekly, discarding them as their popularity wanes, is repertory. The simplest way to make the repertory policy clear to the American mind, unaccustomed to it, is perhaps to point to the Metropolitan Opera House, which is in truth a Repertory Theatre.

Many repertory schemes have been announced. The producers then put on one play. If the play succeeds it may run ten years and they sit back and do nothing further. If it fails they put on another play (providing they have enough money) withdrawing the first. If, as is usually the case, they have no more money, they go out of business.

Against everyone's advice, I opened Monday night, October 25th, 1926, with Benavente's "Saturday Night," following it the next night, October 26th, with "Three Sisters" and during the same week adding the Ibsen plays, so that we immediately put before the public a repertoire of four plays—played by a permanent company. To these four we added a new production every five or six weeks, so that by the end of our first season we had a repertoire of eight plays—and our last week of the season we were able to give a different play at each of the eight performances.

Last season to these eight plays, we added:

Heijerman's "Good Hope"

Wied's " $2 \times 2 = 5$ "

Ferris' "First Stone"

Mohr's "Improvisations in June"

Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler"

The four plays here published, together with some of my notes and full stage directions, will give an idea of the range of our repertoire; and will, I hope, be of use to Little Theatres and amateur groups throughout the country. The Little Theatre movement is one of real and growing importance. It is a living proof of American interest in the drama, and it may be that from some of the finest of these amateur organizations People's Repertory Theatres will eventually spring. It is interesting to remember that The Moscow Art Theatre started as an amateur group.

We are now preparing for our third season, which will include:

Moliere's "Bourgeois Gentilhomme"

Bernard's "L'Invitation au Voyage"

Chekhov's "Cherry Orchard"

Barrie's "Peter Pan"

Quintero's "Lady from Alfaceque"

Andreyev's "Katerina"

The other thirteen plays already in the repertoire will, of course, also be played this season. A lot of work, people will say—is it worth it? I think not one member of the company will disagree with me when I say "Yes! It is worth it." If I am crazy in thinking so, then we are just a band of crazy people. But we are quietly going about the work we love. Gradually new people are joining us—people like Alla Nazimova, who has touched the highest pinnacles of fame and success, and who has come to us because she felt lonely for the theatre—the plays in which she had been brought up—the work done for the love of the work itself—the merging of one's individuality into an ensemble, striving to express a play one felt was beautiful and which should, therefore, be given to the people. And when I say "given" I *mean* just that. Art should belong to each and everyone who needs it. There should be no bargaining, no merchandising about it. It is a thing of Service to the people—bread for their minds and their spirits—a quickening element that keeps them from becoming a mere part of the machinery of modern times.

EVA LE GALLIENNE.

Eva Le Gallienne's

CIVIC REPERTORY PLAYS

HENRIK IBSEN

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Henrik Ibsen was born March 20, 1828, of parentage Scotch, Danish, German and Norwegian. His father was a merchant who met with reverses in Ibsen's youth, which left the family in great poverty. It was while working in an apothecary's shop that Ibsen wrote his first play—*Cataline*. This play, together with *The Warrior's Barrow* and *Olaf Liljekrans* (William Archer did not translate these plays; they are available in English only in The American-Scandinavian Foundation edition), constitute the romantic period in Ibsen's evolution. During this time he started the study of medicine, but his interest in writing—drama particularly—diverted him; and in 1851 he helped to found *The Man*, a periodical to which he contributed. *The Feast at Solhaug* (1856) was his first successful play, and after its presentation he became director of The Norwegian Theatre at Bergen, reducing it to bankruptcy in five years. After a period spent in folklore research he went to Rome (1864) and from there he sent back his first important play—*Brand*. He spent ten years in Rome, Dresden, Munich and Copenhagen, after which he returned to Norway and lived there until his death in 1906.

Ibsen's work is so generally known that any comment or bibliography should be superfluous. The revised translation of *Hedda Gabler* published here is by Julie Le Gallienne (Miss Le Gallienne's mother) and Paul Leyssac, an actor of The Civic Repertory Theatre. Done by persons intimately connected with the stage it presents a new version—modern, natural and vital.

HEDDA GABLER

by Henrik Ibsen
Revised Translation by
Julie Le Gallienne
and
Paul Leyssac

HEDDA GABLER

MISS JULIANA TESMAN	<i>Alma Kruger</i>
BERTA	<i>Leona Roberts</i>
GEORGE TESMAN	<i>Paul Lcyssac</i>
HEDDA TESMAN (his wife)	<i>Eva Le Gallienne</i>
MRS. ELVSTED	<i>Josephine Hutchinson</i>
JUDGE BRACK	<i>Sayre Crawley</i>
EILERT LOVBORG	<i>Donald Cameron</i>



From "Hedda Gabler"

HEDDA (*Eva Le Gallienne*). But remember, beautifully, Eilert Lovborg—promise me that.

LOVBORG (*Donald Cameron*). Good-bye, Hedda Gabler.

ACT ONE

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colours. Back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. Right, folding door leading to the hall. In the opposite wall, glass door also with curtains drawn back. Through panes are seen part of veranda and trees, their leaves in autumn colouring. An oval table with a cover on it and surrounded with chairs stands well forward. In front, by the right wall, a large stove of porcelain, a grandfather chair, foot rest with cushions, and two foot-stools. In upper right hand corner, a settee and small round table. Front, left, standing a little from the wall, a couch. On the other side of glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway, a what-not with various ornaments. Against the back wall of the inner room, a sofa with tables and chairs. Above sofa is a portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform; lamp hanging from the ceiling. A great many bouquets are arranged in vases about the room. Others lie upon the tables. The floors are covered with thick carpets— Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass doors.

MISS TESMAN, in out-door clothes, enters from the hall, followed by a servant, who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper. MISS TESMAN is a comely, pleasant looking lady about 65. She is simply but carefully dressed in a grey walking costume. BERTA is a middle-aged woman of a countrified appearance.

MISS TESMAN.¹ [*Stops just inside the door, listens, and says softly.*] Good gracious! They're not even up yet!

BERTA. I told you so, Miss, but remember how late the steamer came in last night. And on top of that, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

MISS TESMAN. Oh well, then let them sleep as long as they like.

But, when they do get up they will certainly need a breath of fresh air. [*Opens glass door.*]

BERTA. [*Uncertain what to do with the bouquet.*] There doesn't seem a bit of room anywhere. Maybe I can put it down here, Miss. [*Places the bouquet on the piano.*]

MISS TESMAN. So now you have a new mistress, Berta. Heaven knows it was hard enough for me to part with you.

BERTA. [*Very nearly weeping.*] Don't you think it was hard for me too, Miss? After all the happy years I spent with you and Miss Rina.

MISS TESMAN. Well, we have to make the best of it, Berta. There is nothing else to do. George needs you—he really does. Remember, you have looked after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA. Yes, that is true, Miss Julia—but I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home, poor dear. How in the world will she manage to get along with the new maid! I am sure she will never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I shall soon be able to train her. And you know quite well that I shall do most of the work myself at first—so don't worry about my poor sister.

BERTA. But you see, Miss, there is something else. I'm so afraid I will never be able to please the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN. Well, I dare say at first there may be one or two things—

BERTA. I have a sort of feeling she will be terrible grand in her ways.

MISS TESMAN. Of course she will—after all, she is the daughter of General Gabler. Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Think how often we saw her riding down the road in her smart riding clothes.

BERTA. Yes, indeed, I haven't forgotten—but, in those days I little thought that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN. Neither did I. But by the way, Berta—while I think of it—don't say Master George any more, say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA. Yes, the young mistress told me last night—they had hardly set foot inside the door before she spoke of it. Then it is really true, Miss?

MISS TESMAN. Indeed it is. Just think, Berta, he was made a doctor by some foreign university while he was abroad. It was a great surprise to me. I hadn't heard a word about it until he told me last night on the pier.

BERTA. Well, he is surely clever enough for anything, he is. But I never thought he would go in for doctoring people.

MISS TESMAN. No, no, no—it's not that sort of doctor he is. [*Comes towards sofa—nods significantly.*] But let me tell you this, later on you may have to call him something still grander.

BERTA. You don't say so! What in the world can that be?

MISS TESMAN. H'm—wouldn't you like to know! I wonder what my poor brother would say if he could see what a great man his little boy has become. [*Looks around.*] Bless me, Berta, what have you done—why have you taken all the covers off the furniture?

BERTA. The mistress told me to. She says she can't abide covers on the chairs.

MISS TESMAN. Perhaps they are going to use this room as a living room.

BERTA. Yes, I think that is the way the mistress wants it. Master George—beg pardon—the doctor, said nothing.

[GEORGE TESMAN, *singing loudly, enters from room at back. He carries an unstrapped empty suit-case. He is a middle-sized young-looking man of 33—rather stout with open cheerful face, fair hair and beard. He wears glasses and is dressed somewhat carelessly in comfortable indoor clothes.*]

MISS TESMAN. Good morning, good morning, George.

TESMAN.² [*In the doorway between the rooms.*] Aunt Julia, dear Aunt Julia. [*Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.*]

You here, so far out, and so early in the morning, eh!

MISS TESMAN. Of course, I had to come and see how you were getting on.

TESMAN. And that in spite of going to bed so late?

MISS TESMAN. Why, my dear boy, that makes no difference to me.

TESMAN. Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier?
Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, quite all right, thank goodness. Judge Brack was kind enough to see me safely to my door.

TESMAN. We were so sorry we couldn't give you a lift—but you saw what a pile of luggage Hedda had with her.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, I must say she had an amazing amount of luggage.

BERTA. [*Who has been standing there the whole time.*] I wonder if I should ask the mistress if there is anything I can do for her?

TESMAN. No, thank you, Berta, you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA. [*Going towards her right.*] Very well, sir.

TESMAN. But look here—take this suit-case with you.

BERTA. [*Taking it.*] I will put it up in the attic. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN. Fancy, Aunt Julia, I had that suit-case crammed full of papers I had copied. It is unbelievable how much I found in the archives I examined. Curious old details no one had any idea existed.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, dear, you certainly don't seem to have wasted your time on the wedding trip.

TESMAN. No, indeed, I haven't. But why don't you take off your hat, Aunt Julia? Look here! Let me help you, eh?

MISS TESMAN. [*While he is helping her.*] How sweet of you. This is just like the old days when you were still at home with us.

TESMAN. [*With the hat in his hands, looks at it from all sides.*] Why, what a gorgeous hat you have treated yourself to.

MISS TESMAN. I bought that on Hedda's account.

TESMAN. On Hedda's account? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, I don't want Hedda to feel ashamed of her old Aunt if we should happen to go out together.

TESMAN. [*Patting her cheek.*] You are a dear—always thinking of everything. [*Puts hat on chair beside table. Chair 12.*] And now let's sit down and have a cosy little chat until Hedda comes. [*Seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*]

MISS TESMAN.³ [*Takes both his hands and looks at him.*] I can't tell you what a joy it is to have you again, George, to have you here before my very eyes. You, my poor brother's darling boy.

TESMAN. It is a joy for me too—I can't forget, Aunt Julia, that you have been both father and mother to me.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, dear, I know. You'll always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN. And what about poor Aunt Rina? Isn't she feeling a little better? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. No, dear, I am afraid she will never be better. She is just the same as she has been all these years—but pray God that I may keep her a little longer. Otherwise I don't know what will become of me, especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN. [*Patting her back.*] There, there, there.

MISS TESMAN. [*Suddenly changing her tone— New attack.*] I can't get accustomed to thinking of you as a married man, George—and that it should be you who carried off Hedda Gabler—the fascinating Hedda Gabler—she who always had so many admirers.

TESMAN. [*Hums a little and smiles complaisantly.*] Yes, indeed, I am quite sure I have several good friends who are rather jealous of me, eh?

MISS TESMAN. And think of the wonderful wedding trip you have had. Five, yes, nearly six months.

TESMAN. Well, you must remember the trip was also valuable on account of my research work. You can't imagine all the archives I have gone through and all the books I had to read.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, yes, I can. [*More confidentially and lowering her voice a little.*] But, George, dear, haven't you something—something very special to tell me?

TESMAN. About our trip?

MISS TESMAN. Yes.

TESMAN. No, I don't know of anything that I didn't write you about. I had a doctor's degree conferred upon me, I told you that, last night.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, you told me something like that—but what I mean is, have you any—expectations?

TESMAN. Expectations?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, George. Surely you can talk frankly to your old aunt.

TESMAN. Why of course I have expectations.

MISS TESMAN. Ah!

TESMAN. I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN. A professor—oh, yes, yes—a professor.

TESMAN. Indeed I may say I am certain of it! But surely, Aunt Julia, you know that just as well as I do.

MISS TESMAN. [*Laughing to herself.*] Yes, of course, I do—you are quite right. [*Changing the subject.*] But it was the journey we were talking about. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

TESMAN. Well, after all, the travelling scholarship I had was pretty ample—that went a good way.

MISS TESMAN. All the same, I don't understand how it could be ample enough for two, especially when travelling with a lady. I have always heard that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN. Yes, of course it makes it a little more expensive, but Hedda had to have this trip. She really had to. It was the thing to do.

MISS TESMAN. I suppose so— Nowadays it seems a wedding must be followed by a wedding trip. But, tell me, have you been all over the house?

TESMAN. Yes, you may be sure I have. I have been up and about ever since daybreak.

MISS TESMAN. And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN. I'm delighted! Simply delighted! Only I can't imagine what we are to do with the two empty rooms between that one [*Pointing to the inner room*] and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN. [*Laughing.*] Oh, my dear George, I am sure you will find plenty of use for them—a little later on.

TESMAN. [*Simple and naïve—mean it.*] Yes, you are quite right, Aunt Julia—naturally, as I collect more and more books, eh?

MISS TESMAN. Exactly, my dear boy—it was your books I was thinking of.

TESMAN. I am especially pleased for Hedda's sake, because be-

fore we were engaged she said so often that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.

MISS TESMAN. But you will find all this very expensive, my dear George—very expensive.

TESMAN. [*Looks at her a little cast down.*] I am afraid so—about how much do you really think it will cost, eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, that is impossible to say until I have seen all the bills.

TESMAN. Fortunately Judge Brack has been able to secure very favorable terms for me—so he wrote Hedda.

MISS TESMAN. Don't worry about that, my dear boy—you see I have given security for the furniture and the carpets.

TESMAN. Security! You—dear Aunt Julia. What sort of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN. A mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN. [*Jumping up from the sofa.*] What! On your annuity? And Aunt Rina's?

MISS TESMAN. I did not know what else to do.

TESMAN. [*Standing in front of her.*] You must be mad, Aunt Julia—quite mad! That annuity is all you and Aunt Rina have to live on.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well—don't get so excited about it. It was only a matter of form, Judge Brack said. He was kind enough to arrange the entire affair for me.

TESMAN. That is all very well. But, nevertheless—

MISS TESMAN. And, of course, from now on you will have your own salary to depend upon— And even if we did have to help out a little at the start—it would only be the greatest pleasure to us.

TESMAN. Oh, Aunt Julia, that is just like you—always making sacrifices for me.

MISS TESMAN. [*Rises and lays her hands on his shoulders.*] I have no other happiness in the world but to smooth the way for you, my dear boy, since you have neither father nor mother to depend on. I admit things have looked pretty black sometimes, but thank heaven, George, we have reached the goal now, and you have nothing to fear.

TESMAN. Yes, it is really extraordinary how everything has turned out for the best.

MISS TESMAN. And the people who were against you—who wanted to bar your way. [*Read as broken speech*]. Even your most dangerous rival has fallen. Well, he made his bed—let him lie on it—poor misguided creature.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away I mean?

MISS TESMAN. Only that he is supposed to have published a new book.

TESMAN. Eilert Lovborg! A new book? Recently, eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, that is what they say; but I don't think any book of his could be worth much. Now, it will be quite another story when your new book appears. What is it to be about, George?

TESMAN. It will deal with the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN. Fancy being able to write about such things.

TESMAN. It may be some time before the book is ready. First I must arrange and sort out all my papers, you see.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can do that better than you. In such matters you certainly follow in your father's footsteps.

TESMAN. I am so eager to begin—especially now that I have my own comfortable home to work in.

MISS TESMAN. And, most of all, you have your heart's desire—the wife you wanted.

TESMAN. [*Embracing her.*] You are right, Aunt Julia. Hedda is the best part of it all. [*Looks towards the doorway.*]—But, there she is, eh?

[*HEDDA enters the room. She is about 29. She is a woman of breeding and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque—her eyes, steel-grey, express a cold unruffled repose. Hair of medium brown. She is dressed in a somewhat loose-fitting morning gown.*]

MISS TESMAN. [*Going to meet HEDDA.*] Good morning, good morning, Hedda, dear, and welcome home.

HEDDA. [*Holds out her hand.*] Good morning, dear Miss Tesman. What an early visitor you are. How kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. [*Slightly embarrassed.*] Oh, not at all. And how did the bride sleep in her new home?

HEDDA. Thank you, fairly well.

TESMAN. [*Laughing.*] Fairly well! I like that, Hedda! You were still fast asleep when I got up.

HEDDA. Fortunately! But you know, Miss Tesman, one must always adapt one's self gradually to new surroundings. [*Looking towards the left.*] Oh, how tiresome. The maid has opened the door and let in a whole flood of sunshine.

MISS TESMAN. [*Going towards glass door.*] Well, then, we'll close it.

HEDDA. [*Crossing to mantelpiece.*] No, no, don't do that. Tesman, dear, please draw the curtain. That will give a softer light.

TESMAN. [*At the door.*] All right, all right— There, Hedda, now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA. Yes, we certainly need fresh air with these stacks of flowers— But, my dear Miss . . . won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you. Now that I know everything is all right here, I must be getting back to my poor sister who is waiting for me.

TESMAN. Give her my very best love, Aunt Julia, and tell her I will come and see her later in the day.

MISS TESMAN. Certainly, I will do that. But, by the way, George [*Feeling in her pocket.*]—I had almost forgotten. I've brought something for you.

TESMAN. What can that be Aunt Julia, eh?

MISS TESMAN. [*Producing a flat parcel wrapped in newspaper and handing it to him.*] Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN. [*Opening the parcel.*] Well, I declare, so you have really kept them for me. Hedda, isn't that touching, eh?

HEDDA. Well, dear, what is it?

TESMAN. My slippers, Hedda—my old bedroom slippers.

HEDDA. Oh, yes. I remember. You often talked about them on our journey.

TESMAN. I missed them terribly. [*He goes up to her.*] Do have a look at them Hedda.

HEDDA. No, thank you, I am really not interested.

TESMAN. [*Following her about.*] Just think—Aunt Rina em-

broidered these for me during her illness. I can't tell you how many memories they have for me.

HEDDA. Scarcely for me.

MISS TESMAN. Of course not, George—they mean nothing to Hedda.

TESMAN. Well, but now that she belongs to the family, I thought—

HEDDA. [*Interrupting.*] I am sure we will never be able to get on with this maid, George.

MISS TESMAN. Not get on with Berta?

TESMAN. But my dear, what do you mean?

HEDDA. [*Pointing.*] Look, she has left her old hat on that chair.

TESMAN. [*In consternation, drops slippers on the floor.*] Why, Hedda—

HEDDA. Think if anyone came in and saw it!

TESMAN. But Hedda, that is Aunt Julia's hat.

HEDDA. Is it?

MISS TESMAN. [*Taking up the hat.*] Yes, indeed, it is mine. And what's more, it is not old, little Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. [*At window.*] I really didn't look at it very closely, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. [*Putting on her hat.*] It's the very first time I have worn it.

TESMAN. And it is such a nice hat—quite a beauty.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it isn't as beautiful as all that. [*Looks around her.*] My parasol! Ah, here it is. [*She takes it.*] For this is mine, too, [*Mutters.*] not Berta's.

TESMAN. A new hat and a new parasol— Just fancy, Hedda.

HEDDA. It's all very nice, I'm sure.

TESMAN. Yes; isn't it, eh? But, before you go Aunt Julia, you must take a good look at Hedda. See how lovely she is!

MISS TESMAN. That's nothing new, my dear boy. Hedda was always lovely. [*She nods and goes towards the right.*]

TESMAN. [*Following.*] Yes, but have you noticed in what splendid condition she is? How she has filled out while we have been away?

HEDDA. [*Child theme, first time.*] Oh! Don't—

MISS TESMAN. [*Stops and turns round quickly.*] Filled out?

TESMAN. Of course you don't notice it so much in that loose dress, but you see I have the opportunity—

HEDDA. [*Near the glass door, impatiently.*] You haven't any opportunity at all.

TESMAN. I am sure it must be the mountain air in the Tyrol—

HEDDA. [*Curtly, interrupting.*] I am exactly as I was when I left.

TESMAN. So you say—but I am quite sure you are not. Don't you agree with me, Aunt Julia?

MISS TESMAN. [*Who has been gazing at her with folded hands.*] Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. [*She goes up to her, takes her head between both her hands, draws it downward, and kisses her hair.*] God bless and keep you, Hedda Tesman—for George's sake.

HEDDA. [*Gently freeing herself.*] Please let me go.

MISS TESMAN. [*In quiet emotion.*] I will not let a day pass without coming to see you.

TESMAN. That is right, Aunt.

MISS TESMAN. Good-bye—good-bye!

[*She goes out by the hall door. TESMAN accompanies her. The door remains half open. TESMAN can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers. In the meantime, HEDDA walks about the room, raising her arms and wringing her hands, as if in desperation. Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door and stands there looking out. Presently TESMAN returns and closes the door behind him.*]

TESMAN. [*Picks up the slippers from the floor.*] What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA. [*Once more calm and mistress of herself.*] I am looking at the leaves—they are so yellow—so withered.

TESMAN. [*Wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table.*] You see, we are well into September now.

HEDDA. [*Again restless.*] Yes, good heavens, September! September already.

TESMAN. Don't you think Aunt Julia was a little strange? Almost solemn I thought? Can you imagine what was the matter with her, eh?

HEDDA.⁴ Well, you see, I hardly know her. Isn't she always like that?

TESMAN. No; not as she was today.

HEDDA. [*Leaving the glass door.*] Perhaps she was a little hurt because of the hat.

TESMAN. Oh, I don't think so. She may have been for a moment—

HEDDA. [*Crossing to fireplace again.*] After all, such an extraordinary way to go on—flinging one's things about in the drawing-room— One doesn't do that sort of thing.

TESMAN. You may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

HEDDA. In any case, I shall manage to smooth things over—and when you call this afternoon you might ask her to spend the evening here.

TESMAN. Yes. I will. And there is another thing you might do which will give her the greatest pleasure.

HEDDA. What?

TESMAN. If you would try to be a little more affectionate with her—just now and again, for my sake. Eh?

HEDDA. I shall try to call her Aunt, but that is all I can do.

TESMAN. Well—all right. Only I thought, now that you belong to the family, you—er—

HEDDA. H'm, I can't in the least see why—[*She goes toward centre in front of piano and closes lid with a bang.*]

TESMAN.⁵ [*After a pause.*] Is there anything the matter with you Hedda, eh?

HEDDA. No. I am only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go with the rest of the furniture.

TESMAN. The first time I draw my salary we will see about exchanging it.

HEDDA. Why exchange it? I don't want to part with it. Why couldn't we put it in the inner room and then get another for this room? [*Pause.*] I mean—later on when we can afford it—

TESMAN. [*A little taken aback.*] Yes—of course we could do that—

HEDDA. [*Takes up the bouquet from the piano.*] These flowers were not here last night when we arrived.

TESMAN. Perhaps Aunt Julia brought them for you.

HEDDA. [*Examining the bouquet.*] Here's a card. [*Takes card out of envelope and reads:*] "Shall return later in the day."

Can you guess who it's from?

TESMAN. No. From whom?

HEDDA. From Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN. Really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife? The former Miss Rysing?

HEDDA. Yes, exactly. The girl with the irritating hair that she was always showing off. I'm told she was an old flame of yours.

TESMAN. [*Laughing.*] Oh—that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. Fancy her being in town.

HEDDA. How funny that she should call on us. I haven't seen her for years; not since we were at school together.

TESMAN. I haven't seen her either, for heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can bear to live in that out-of-the-way hole?

HEDDA. [*After a moment's thought, says suddenly.*] Tell me, George, isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—Eilert Lovborg lives!

TESMAN. Yes, somewhere in that part of the country.

[*BERTA enters by the hall door.*]

BERTA. That lady, ma'am, who brought the flowers a little while ago, is here again. [*Pointing.*] The flowers you have in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA. Ah! Is she? Please show her in. [*Tosses the flowers on piano and goes quickly to greet Mrs. Elvsted.*]

[*BERTA opens the door for MRS. ELVSTED, and goes out herself.*]

MRS. ELVSTED is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than Hedda. She wears a dark visiting dress, tasteful but not in the latest fashion. HEDDA receives her warmly.]

HEDDA.⁶ How do you do, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, I am delighted to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED.⁷ [*Nervously struggling for self-control.*] I am afraid it is a very long time since we met.

TESMAN. [*Gives her his hand.*] I am delighted, too—

HEDDA. Thanks for your lovely flowers—

MRS. ELVSTED. Please don't mention it. I would have called yesterday afternoon, but I heard that you were away.

TESMAN. Have you just come to town, eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. I arrived yesterday about midday and I was so upset when I heard you were not at home.

HEDDA. Upset? Why?

TESMAN. Why, my dear Miss Rysing—I mean Mrs. Elvsted—

HEDDA. I hope that you are not in any trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I am. And I don't know another living soul in town I can turn to.

HEDDA. Come, sit here on the sofa—

MRS. ELVSTED. I am really too nervous to sit down.

HEDDA. Oh no you're not. Come here. [*She draws MRS. ELVSTED down to the sofa and sits on arm of sofa.*]

TESMAN. Well, what is it, Mrs. Elvsted—

HEDDA. Has anything special happened at home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and no. Oh, I do hope you won't misunderstand me.

HEDDA. Then you had better tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I suppose that is what you have come for, eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, of course. First of all I must tell you—if you don't already know it—that Eilert Lovborg is also in town.

HEDDA. Lovborg—!

TESMAN. What! Has Eilert come back? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes—yes, good heavens, I heard it!

MRS. ELVSTED. He has been here a week already—a whole week alone in this terrible town, with its many temptations.

HEDDA. But, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, why need you worry so much about him?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly:*] He was the children's tutor, you see.

HEDDA. Your children's?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA. Your step-children's, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

TESMAN. [*Somewhat hesitatingly.*] Was he—I don't know how to express it—was he—regular enough in his habits to fill such a post?

MRS. ELVSTED. For the last couple of years his conduct has been irreproachable.

TESMAN. Has it indeed? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, yes, I heard it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same—now that I know he is here—in this great town—with a large sum of money, I can't help being worried to death about him.

TESMAN. Why did he not remain where he was; with you and your husband, eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. After his book was published, he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

TESMAN. Yes, that is true. Aunt Julia told me he had published a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, a big book, dealing in broad outline with the march of civilization. It came out about a fortnight ago. It has sold so well and has been so much read—and made such a sensation—

TESMAN. Has it indeed? I suppose it is something he wrote in his better days?

MRS. ELVSTED. Long ago, you mean?

TESMAN. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

TESMAN. Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, if it would only last.

HEDDA. [*Very quickly.*] Have you seen him here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not yet. I had the greatest difficulty in finding his address—but this morning I got it at last.

HEDDA. [*Looks searchingly at her.*] Doesn't it seem a little odd that your husband—h'm—

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Starting nervously.*] That my husband! What?

HEDDA. Should send you to town on such an errand—that he didn't come himself to look for his friend?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, no, no. My husband has no time—and besides I—I had some shopping to do.

HEDDA. [*With a slight smile.*] Ah!—I see!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Rising quickly and uneasily.*] I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—do receive Eilert Lovborg kindly if he comes to you. He is sure to do that; you were such great friends in the old days, and I understand, you were interested in the same studies—the same kind of science.

TESMAN. Yes, we used to be, at any rate.

MRS. ELVSTED. That is why I hope that you—you too—will keep an eye on him. You will promise me that Mr. Tesman; won't you?

TESMAN. With the greatest of pleasure Mrs. Rysing.

HEDDA. [*Lighting cigarette.*] Elvsted.

TESMAN. I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert; you may rely upon me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how very kind of you. [*Presses his hands.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Frightened.*] You see, my husband is so very fond of him.

HEDDA. [*Rising.*] Yes—I see. [*Pause.*] You ought to write to him, George—he may not care to come of his own accord.

TESMAN. Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda. Eh?

HEDDA. Yes—the sooner, the better. Why not at once?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Imploringly.*] Oh, it would be so kind of you.

TESMAN. I will write this very moment. Have you his address, Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. [*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket and hands it to him.*] Here it is.

TESMAN. Good. Then I'll go in—[*Looks about him.*] By-the-way, I mustn't forget my slippers. Oh, here they are. [*Takes parcel and is about to go.*]

HEDDA.⁸ Be sure to write him a cordial, friendly letter—and a good long one, too.

TESMAN. Yes, I will do that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Please, not a word to show that I suggested it.

TESMAN. Of course not—I wouldn't dream of such a thing. [*He goes out to the right, through the inner room.*]

HEDDA. [*Goes up to MRS. ELVSTED, smiles and says in a low voice:*] There—we have killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED. What do you mean?

HEDDA. Couldn't you see that I wanted to get rid of him?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, to write the letter.

HEDDA. And that I might speak to you alone.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Confused.*] About the same thing?

HEDDA. Precisely.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Apprehensively.*] But there's nothing else to tell, Mrs. Tesman—absolutely nothing.

HEDDA. Of course, there is! There's a great deal more to tell.

I can see that. Sit here—

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Anxiously looking at her watch.*] But, my dear Mrs. Tesman—I was really thinking of going.

HEDDA. Oh, you can't be in such a hurry. Stay a little while and tell me something of your life at home.

MRS. ELVSTED. That is just what I prefer not to do.

HEDDA. But to me, dear—remember we were at school together.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but you were in a higher class, and besides, I was always so dreadfully afraid of you.

HEDDA. Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, dreadfully. For whenever we met on the stairs, you always pulled my hair.

HEDDA. [*Laughing.*] Did I? Really?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, you did—and once you said you would burn it all off.

HEDDA. Of course—that was only nonsense.

MRS. ELVSTED. But I was so silly in those days.—And since then, —we have drifted so far apart. You see we were in a different set.

HEDDA. Very well, then, we must drift together again. Now listen! At school we called each other by our first names so why shouldn't we now? You must call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Pats her hands.*] What a dear you are! I am not used to kindness.

HEDDA. There, there, there. And, of course, I will call you Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED. My name is Thea.

HEDDA. Yes, of course, I mean Thea. [*Looks at her compassionately.*] So you are really not used to kindness in your own home.

MRS. ELVSTED. If I only had a home. But, alas, I haven't. I never had one.

HEDDA. [*Looks at her for a moment.*] I suspected something of the sort.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gazing helplessly before her.*] Yes, yes, yes.

HEDDA. I am a little vague about it—wasn't it as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

MRS. ELVSTED. No—I was engaged as governess; but his wife—his first wife—was an invalid and rarely left her room—so I started looking after the housekeeping too.

HEDDA. And then—later—you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Sadly.*] Yes, I did.

HEDDA. Let me see. About how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED. That I married him?—

HEDDA. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Five years ago.

HEDDA. Yes—that is right—

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh those five years—or rather the last two or three of them—you can't imagine, Mrs. Tesman—

HEDDA. [*Giving her a little slap on the hand.*] Mrs. Tesman! Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—I will try. Well, Hedda, if you could only understand—

HEDDA. [*Lightly.*] Eilert Lovborg has been in your neighborhood about three years, hasn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks at her doubtfully.*] Eilert Lovborg? Yes—he has.

HEDDA. Did you know him before—here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED. Only very slightly—I mean—I knew him by name of course.

HEDDA. But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, he came every day. You see he gave the children lessons. For, in the long run, I couldn't manage it all by myself.

HEDDA. Of course not. And your husband—I suppose he is away a great deal.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, being Sheriff, he often has to travel about his district.

HEDDA. [*Taking THEA's hands.*] Thea, my poor darling. Now you must tell me everything exactly as it is.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well then, you must question me.

HEDDA. What sort of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Evasively.*] I am sure he means to be kind.

HEDDA. But isn't he a little too old for you, dear? There must be at least twenty years between you, isn't there?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Irritably.*] Yes, yes—and that makes it still more impossible. We haven't a thought in common—nothing in fact.

HEDDA. But all the same isn't he fond of you in his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I really don't know. I think he looks upon me as useful property. Besides, it doesn't cost much to keep me—I am not expensive.

HEDDA. That is stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Shakes her head.*] It cannot be otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for anyone but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

HEDDA. And for Eilert Lovborg, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looking at her.*] For Eilert Lovborg? What put that into your head?

HEDDA. Well, my dear, it seems to me if he sent you all the way here to find him—isn't that what you told Tesman? [*Smiles almost imperceptibly.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*With a little nervous twitch.*] Did I? Yes, perhaps I did. [*Vehemently, but not loudly.*] I suppose I may just as well make a clean breast of it—for it's bound to come out sooner or later.

HEDDA. What?

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, to make a long story short, my husband had not the slightest idea that I was leaving.

HEDDA. Your husband didn't know!

MRS. ELVSTED. No, of course not. In any case he was away from home himself—he was travelling. Oh, I couldn't bear it any longer, Hedda—I simply couldn't—knowing I should be so utterly alone in the future.

HEDDA. Well, and then?

MRS. ELVSTED. So I packed a few of my things—those I needed most—and without saying a word to anyone, I left the house.
HEDDA. Just like that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, and took the first train to town.

HEDDA. Why, Thea! How did you *dare* do such a thing?

MRS. ELVSTED. What else could I possibly do?

HEDDA. But what will your husband say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED. Home to him?

HEDDA. Yes, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED.⁹ I shall never go back to him. [*Long pause.*]

HEDDA. [*Rising.*] Then you have really left your home—for good and all?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. I saw nothing else to do.

HEDDA. But to do it so openly, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. Why not? After all, it is impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

HEDDA. But . . . Thea . . . What will people say?

MRS. ELVSTED. They can say whatever they like. [*Sits herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*] I have done nothing but what I was obliged to do.

HEDDA. [*After a short silence goes to table behind couch.*] What are your plans now?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know yet. I only know this, that I must live here where *Eilert Lovborg* is—if I am to live at all.

HEDDA. My dear Thea—but how did this—this friendship—start between you and *Eilert Lovborg*?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it came gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

HEDDA. Did you indeed?

MRS. ELVSTED. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that; but because he saw how repulsive they were to me—he dropped them.

HEDDA. [*Concealing an involuntary smile of scorn.*] Then you have reformed him—so to speak—little Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. He says so himself, at any rate. And he—in return—has made a real human being of me. He taught me to think and to understand so many things.

HEDDA. [*With a laugh.*] Did he give you lessons too, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. No, not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about so many different things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share his work—when he allowed me to help him!

HEDDA.¹⁰ Oh he did, did he?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! He never wrote a word without my assistance.

HEDDA. Just like two good comrades?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Eagerly.*] Comrades! How curious, Hedda—that is the very word he used! Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; and yet I cannot; for how long will it all last?

HEDDA. You are not very sure of him, then?

MRS. ELVSTED [*Gloomily.*] A woman's shadow stands between Eilert Lovborg and me.

HEDDA. [*Looks at her.*] Who can that be?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. Someone he used to know. Someone he has never been able to forget.

HEDDA. Has he told you anything about her?

MRS. ELVSTED. Only once—quite vaguely.

HEDDA. What did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED. He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA. [*With cold composure.*] What nonsense! No one does that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And that is why I think it must have been that red-haired cabaret singer whom he once—

HEDDA. Yes, very likely.

MRS. ELVSTED. I remember they used to say that she travelled about with loaded pistols.

HEDDA. Oh—then of course it must have been she.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Wringing her hands.*] Just imagine, Hedda—I hear that this woman—this singer—is in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do—

HEDDA. [*Glancing towards the inner room.*] Sh! Here comes Tesman. [*Rises and whispers.*] All this must be between us.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Springing up.*] Yes, yes—of course!

[GEORGE TESMAN, with a letter in his hand, comes from the right through the inner room.]

TESMAN. There now—the letter is finished.

HEDDA. Good. Mrs. Elvsted was just going. Wait a moment—
I'll go with you to the garden gate.

TESMAN. Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

HEDDA. [*Takes it.*] I will tell her to.

[*BERTA enters from the hall.*]

BERTA. Judge Brack wishes to know if you will see him.

HEDDA. Yes, ask him to come in. And please post this letter.

BERTA. [*Taking the letter.*] Yes, ma'am.

[*She opens the door for JUDGE BRACK and goes out herself.*]

BRACK is a man of 45; thick set, but well built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass which he now and again lets drop.]

JUDGE BRACK.¹¹ [*With his hat in his hand, bowing.*] May one venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA. Of course one may.

TESMAN. [*Presses his hand.*] You are welcome at any time.

[*Introducing him.*] Judge Brack—Miss Rysing—

HEDDA. Oh—!

BRACK. [*Bowing.*] I am delighted!

HEDDA. [*Looks at him and laughs.*] What fun to have a look at you by daylight, Judge!

BRACK. Do you find me—altered?

HEDDA. A little younger, I think!

BRACK. Thank you so much.

TESMAN. But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing? She actually—

HEDDA. Oh, do leave me out of it! You had better thank Judge Brack for all the trouble he has taken—

BRACK. Oh, that is nothing—it was a pleasure—

HEDDA. Yes, you are a loyal soul. But Mrs. Elvsted was on the point of going—so au revoir Judge. I shall be back again presently.

[*Mutual salutations. MRS. ELVSTED and HEDDA go out by the hall door. Short pause.*]

BRACK. Well,—is your wife fairly satisfied?

TESMAN. Yes—we can't thank you enough. Of course she talks of rearranging things a little here and there and we shall have to buy a few additional trifles.

BRACK. Really?

TESMAN. But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she herself will get what is needed.

BRACK. [*Sits himself on sofa.*] There is something I would like to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN. Indeed?—I understand. [*Sits himself.*] Yes. I suppose we must get down to business. [*Making sweeping gesture around the room.*]

BRACK. You mean the money question.—After all that is not so very pressing, though I can't help thinking it would have been better if we had been less extravagant.

TESMAN. But that would never have done. You know Hedda, my dear Judge—I couldn't possibly have asked her to live in a cheap sort of way.

BRACK. No, no—that is just the difficulty.

TESMAN. Fortunately, it won't be long before I receive my appointment.

BRACK. Well, you see—sometimes such things hang fire.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

BRACK. Nothing really definite—. [*Interrupting himself.*] But I have *one* piece of news for you.

TESMAN. Have you?

BRACK. Your old friend Eilert Lovborg is back in town.

TESMAN. I know that already.

BRACK. Indeed? Who told you?

TESMAN. That lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK. Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

TESMAN. Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Aha—yes—Sheriff Elvsted's wife; of course. He was living up in their neighborhood.

TESMAN. And fancy—I'm delighted to hear he is quite a reformed character.

BRACK. Yes—so they say.

TESMAN. And they say he has published a new book.

BRACK. Indeed he has.

TESMAN. And I hear it has made quite a sensation.

BRACK. A most unusual sensation.

TESMAN. Fancy—isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents—I felt so sorry to think he had gone completely to rack and ruin. (*He really means this; he is good.*)

BRACK. Well, everybody thought so.

TESMAN. But I can't imagine what he will do now. How in the world will he be able to make a living!

[*During the last words HEDDA has entered from the hall.*]

HEDDA. [*To BRACK, laughing with a touch of scorn.*] Isn't that like Tesman! Always worrying about how people are going to make their living.

TESMAN. Well, you see, dear—it is poor Eilert we are talking about.

HEDDA. [*Glancing at him rapidly.*] Oh, really? [*Seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove.*] What is the matter with him?

TESMAN. Well—he's probably squandered the money he inherited long ago, and he can hardly be expected to write a new book every year. So it's not strange that I should wonder what may become of him?

BRACK. Perhaps I can give you some information on the subject.

TESMAN. Indeed!

BRACK. Remember that his relatives have a good deal of influence.

TESMAN. But, unfortunately, his relatives have entirely washed their hands of him.

BRACK. At one time he was called the hope of the family.

TESMAN. At one time yes! But he put an end to all that.

HEDDA. Are you so sure? [*With a slight smile.*] I hear they have quite reformed him up at Sheriff Elvsted's.

BRACK. Besides, there is his new book—

TESMAN. Well, I certainly hope they will find something for him to do. I have just written to him. I have asked him to come and see us this evening, Hedda dear.

BRACK. But my dear fellow—you are coming to my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

HEDDA. Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN. Yes, I really had.

BRACK. I am sure we needn't worry about him—he won't turn up!

TESMAN. Why shouldn't he?

BRACK. [*With a little hesitation, rising.*] My dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I think I ought not to keep you in the dark about something that—that—

TESMAN. That concerns Eilert?

BRACK. You as well as him.

TESMAN. Well, my dear Judge, what is it?

BRACK. You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

TESMAN. [*Jumping up uneasily.*] Has anything happened? Eh?

BRACK. The nomination may depend on the result of a competition—

TESMAN. A competition! Think of that, Hedda.

HEDDA. [*Leans further back in the chair.Laughs all through these lines.*] Aha—aha!

TESMAN. But who could my competitor be? Surely not—

BRACK. Yes. Precisely—Eilert Lovborg!

TESMAN. [*Clasping his hands.*] No, no—it is quite inconceivable—quite inconceivable—eh?

BRACK. H'm—it may come to that all the same.

TESMAN. But Judge Brack—it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. [*Gesticulates with his arms.*]

For remember, I am a married man—we married on the strength of these prospects, Hedda and I, ran deeply into debt—and borrowed money from Aunt Julia, too. Good heavens, they had practically promised me the appointment. Eh?

BRACK. Well, I dare say you will get the appointment all the same, but after a competition.

HEDDA. [*Immovable in her arm-chair.*] How interesting, Tesman. It will have quite a sporting interest.

TESMAN. Why, my dear Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it.

HEDDA. [*As before.*] I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see which of you will win.

BRACK. In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is far better that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you start buying the various little trifles you are thinking of.

HEDDA. But, really, that can make no difference.

BRACK. Indeed! Then I have no more to say. Good-bye. [*To TESMAN.*] I will call for you later on my way back from my afternoon walk.

TESMAN. Oh, dear, dear. My head's in a whirl.

HEDDA. [*Holds out her hand.*] Good-bye Judge; I hope to see you later.

BRACK. Many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye!

TESMAN. [*Accompanying him to the door.*] Good-bye, my dear Judge. You must really excuse me—[*JUDGE BRACK goes out by the hall door. TESMAN out with BRACK for a moment.*] Oh, Hedda, Hedda—one should never rush into adventures, eh?

HEDDA. [*Looks at him smiling.*] Do you do that?

TESMAN. Yes, dear—we can't deny it was rather adventurous to marry and settle down on mere expectations.

HEDDA. [*Lights cigarette. Sits end of sofa on arm.*] Perhaps you are right.

TESMAN. Well, at any rate, we have our comfortable home, Hedda—the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I might almost say. Eh!—

HEDDA. We were going to do a lot of entertaining weren't we George—keep open house—

TESMAN. Yes, if you only knew how I have been looking forward to it. Fancy—to see you as hostess in a distinguished circle. Eh? Well, well, well—for the present we must be happy in each other's company—just invite Aunt Julia now and then—oh, I wanted it all to be so different for you, dear—so entirely different—

HEDDA. I suppose I shall have to do without my butler?

TESMAN. Yes, I'm afraid a butler is quite out of the question at present.

HEDDA. And the saddle-horse you promised me—

TESMAN. [*Aghast.*] The saddle-horse!

HEDDA. I suppose that is out of the question too—

TESMAN. Good gracious! I should think so.

HEDDA. [*Goes up the room.*] Well—anyhow, I shall have one thing to amuse myself with.

TESMAN. [*Beaming.*] Thank heaven for that!—Tell me what that is Hedda, eh?

HEDDA. [*In the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn.*]
My pistols, George.

TESMAN. [*In alarm.*] Your pistols!

HEDDA. [*With cold eyes.*] General Gabler's pistols. [*She goes out through the inner room to the left.*]

TESMAN.¹² [*Rushes up to the middle doorway, calls after her.*]

No, no—for heaven's sake, don't touch those dangerous things, Hedda darling. Please for my sake!—

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

The room at the Tesmans' as in the First Act, except that the piano has been removed and an up-to-date writing table, with book shelves, put in its place. A small table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away. MRS. ELVSTED'S bouquet is upon the large table in front. It is afternoon.

HEDDA, *in afternoon dress, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. Another like it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing table.*

HEDDA.¹ [*Looks down the garden, and calls:*] Welcome back, Judge.

BRACK. [*Is heard calling from a distance.*] Thank you, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. [*Raises the pistol and points.*] Now I'm going to shoot you, Judge.

BRACK. [*Calling unseen.*] No, no—don't aim at me like that!

HEDDA. That is what you get for sneaking in the back way. [*She fires.*]

BRACK. [*Nearer.*] Have you gone quite mad!

HEDDA. So sorry! Did I hit you by any chance?

BRACK. [*Still outside.*] I wish you would stop all this nonsense!

HEDDA. Come along Judge. I will let you pass.

[JUDGE BRACK, *he has changed his suit, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*]

BRACK. What the deuce—are you still fooling with those pistols? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA. Oh, I am just killing time by shooting up into the blue.

BRACK. [*Gently takes the pistol out of her hand.*] Allow me!

[*Looks at it.*] H'm—I know this pistol. I have seen it before.

[*Looks around.*] Where is the case for it? Ah—[*Lays the pistol in it and shuts the lid.*] That game is finished for today.

HEDDA. But what in heaven's name can I do all day long?

BRACK. Haven't you had any visitors?

HEDDA. [*Closing the glass door.*] No, not a single one. I suppose all our friends are still out of town.

BRACK. Isn't Tesman home?

HEDDA. No. He rushed off to his aunt's directly after luncheon. He didn't expect you so early.

BRACK. H'm, h'm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that.

HEDDA. [*Turning her head to look at him.*] Why stupid?

BRACK. Because then I should have come even earlier.

HEDDA. [*Crossing the room.*] Then you would have found no one to receive you; for I have been dressing ever since lunch.

BRACK. And isn't there a crack in the door through which one could talk?

HEDDA. No—I'm afraid you forgot to make one, Judge.

BRACK. Again my stupidity!

HEDDA. Let's sit down here and wait. I don't think Tesman will be back for some time.

BRACK. Never mind. I shan't be impatient.

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK. [*In the same tone.*] Well?

HEDDA. I spoke first.

BRACK. [*Bending a little forward.*] Come, Mrs. Tesman, let us have a little chat.

HEDDA. [*Leaning further back on the sofa.*] It seems an eternity since our last talk, don't you think so? Of course I don't count the words we had last night and this morning.

BRACK. You mean a real talk—you and I alone?

HEDDA. Yes—something like that.

BRACK. There hasn't been a day that I haven't wished you were here.

HEDDA. I have wished that too.

BRACK. You? Really. Mrs. Tesman? And I thought you were enjoying your trip so much.

HEDDA. Yes, just you go on thinking that.

BRACK. But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA. Oh, Tesman! You know him. He thinks there is no greater joy in life than grubbing through a lot of dusty books

and making copies of old parchments or whatever they are.
BRACK. [*With a touch of malice.*] Well, after all, that is his vocation in life—or rather part of it.

HEDDA. Yes, of course. When it is your vocation—but I, no my dear Judge—I have been bored—bored to distraction.

BRACK. [*Sympathetically.*] Do you really mean that—seriously?

HEDDA. Surely you can understand how awful it is to go six whole months without meeting a soul one can really talk to—

BRACK. Of course—I should feel that too.

HEDDA. And then, the most intolerable thing of all—

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA.—to be everlastingly with one and the same person.

BRACK. [*With a nod of assent.*] Morning, noon and night, yes—at all possible times.

HEDDA. I said “*everlastingly*.”

BRACK. H’m—but I should think that with our good-natured Tesman—one might—

HEDDA. Tesman is a *specialist*, my dear Judge.

BRACK. Undeniably.

HEDDA. And specialists are not amusing travelling companions—not in the long run, at any rate.

BRACK. Not even—the specialist one happens to love?

HEDDA. Ouf—don’t use that sickening word.

BRACK. [*Taken aback.*] My dear Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. [*Half laughing—half irritated.*] Just you try it. Nothing but the history of civilization morning, noon and night.

BRACK. *Everlastingly*.

HEDDA. Yes, yes, yes. And then all this business about the domestic industry of the Middle Ages—! That’s the most irritating part of it all.

BRACK. [*Looks searchingly at her.*] But, tell me—in that case, how did you happen to—

HEDDA. To marry George Tesman, you mean? Well, is there anything very odd in that?

BRACK. Both yes and no, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. I was pretty tired of dancing, my dear Judge. After all, I am not as young as I was—[*With a slight shudder.*]—no, I won’t say that, nor even think it.

BRACK. Why in the world should you?

HEDDA. Of course—why should I? [*Watching him closely.*]
And, after all, you must admit that George Tesman is a most respectable person.

BRACK. Yes, his respectability is beyond all question.

HEDDA.² And I don't see anything especially funny about him either; do you?

BRACK. Funny? No—I shouldn't exactly say so.

HEDDA. Well—anyhow he is industrious and a scholar. After all, I see no reason why he should not one day come to the front—

BRACK. [*Looks at her hesitatingly.*] I thought that you believed, like everyone else, that he would rank among the very first.

HEDDA. [*With an expression of fatigue.*] Yes, so I did. And then, since he was so determined to provide for me— I really don't see why I shouldn't have accepted his offer.

BRACK. No, not if you look at it from that angle—

HEDDA. It was more than my other admirers were prepared to do, my dear Judge.

BRACK. [*Laughing.*] Well, I can't answer for the rest, but, as for myself, you know quite well that I have always had a certain respect for marriage—[HEDDA gives him a quick look.]—for marriage as an institution, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. [*Jestingly.*] Oh, I assure you, I never had any hopes as far as you were concerned.

BRACK. All I ask of life is to know a few people intimately—a few nice people, whom I can help and advise and in whose house I can come and go as—as a trusted friend.

HEDDA. Of the *master* of the house?

BRACK. [*Bowing.*] Frankly, preferably of the wife—and, of course, of the husband, too. Such a triangular friendship—if I may call it so—is really a great convenience for everybody.

HEDDA. Yes, I have often longed for someone to make a third in our travels. Oh, those infernal tête-à-têtes—

BRACK. Fortunately your wedding journey is over.

HEDDA. [*Shaking her head.*] No, not by a long shot. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK. Well then one jumps out and walks about a little, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. I never jump out. [*Incisively.*]

BRACK. Really?

HEDDA. No—there is always someone ready to—

BRACK. [*Laughing.*] To stare at your legs you mean?

HEDDA. Precisely.

BRACK. Well,—good heavens—

HEDDA. [*With a gesture of repulsion.*] I hate that sort of thing.

I would rather keep my seat and continue the tête-à-tête.

BRACK. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple?

HEDDA. Ah!—That is quite another matter.

BRACK. A trusted, sympathetic friend—

HEDDA.—entertaining and amusing in every way—

BRACK.—and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA. [*With an audible sigh.*] Yes—that would be a relief.

BRACK. [*Hears the front door open and glances in that direction.*] The triangle is now completed.

HEDDA. [*Half aloud.*] And on goes the train.

[GEORGE TESMAN, in a grey walking-suit, with a soft hat, enters from the hall. He carries a great many unbound books under his arms and in his pockets.]

TESMAN. [*Goes up to the table beside the corner settee.*] Ouf—it is a warm job to carry all these books. [*Lays them on the table.*] I am positively perspiring, Hedda. Hello—are you there already, my dear Judge, eh? Berta didn't tell me.

BRACK. [*Rising.*] I came in through the garden.

HEDDA. What are all those books?

TESMAN. [*Stands looking them through.*] Some new technical books on my special subject. I simply had to have them.

HEDDA. Technical books George?

BRACK. On his special subject, Mrs. Tesman.

[BRACK and HEDDA exchange a confidential smile.]

HEDDA. Do you need still more books on your special subject, George?

TESMAN. Yes, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many. One must keep up with all that is written and published.

HEDDA. Yes, I suppose *one* must.

TESMAN. [*Searching among his books.*] And look here—I have got hold of Eilert Lovborg's new book too. [*Handing it to her.*] Would you care to look at it Hedda, eh?

HEDDA. No, thank you—or rather—perhaps a little later.

TESMAN. I glanced through it on my way home.

BRACK. And what do you think of it—I mean as a specialist?

TESMAN. I think the moderate way in which he treats his subject is quite remarkable. He never wrote like that before. [*Putting the books together.*] Now I shall take all these into my study. I am longing to cut the leaves—and then I must change my clothes. [*To BRACK.*] I suppose we needn't start just yet, eh?

BRACK. Oh no, there is not the slightest hurry.

TESMAN. Well then, I will take my time. [*Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns.*] By the way, Hedda—Aunt Julia is not coming this evening.

HEDDA. Not coming? Then she is still annoyed about the hat?

TESMAN. Oh, no—not at all. How could you imagine Aunt Julia would be like that? No, the fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

HEDDA. She always is.

TESMAN. Yes, but today she is worse than ever, poor dear.

HEDDA. Well then, of course, it is natural that her sister should remain with her. I shall have to try and bear it.

TESMAN. And you can imagine, dear, how delighted Aunt Julia seemed—because you have returned looking so well—so flourishing.

HEDDA. [*Half aloud.*] Oh, those everlasting aunts.

TESMAN. What?

HEDDA. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

TESMAN. Oh, all right. [*He goes through the inner room, out to the right.*]

BRACK. What was it about the hat?

HEDDA. Oh, a little thing that happened this morning. Miss Tesman left her hat on that chair. [*Looks at him and smiles.*] And I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK. [*Shaking his head.*] My dear Mrs. Tesman, how could you do such a thing to that nice old lady!

HEDDA. Well, you see—such impulses come over me all of a sudden, and I simply can't resist them. [*Sits on arm of sofa down stage.*] I don't know how to explain them myself.

BRACK. [*Behind the easy-chair.*] I believe the explanation is that you are not really happy.

HEDDA. [*Looking straight before her.*] Why should I be happy?
Can you tell me?

BRACK. Well—among other things you have exactly the home
you always wanted.

HEDDA. [*Looks up at him and laughs.*] Do you believe in that
fairy tale?

BRACK. Is it a tale, then?

HEDDA. Mostly—

BRACK. Aha!

HEDDA. I made use of Tesman to see me home from parties
last summer—

BRACK. Unfortunately my way lay in a different direction. [*Sits
on tabouret by table.*]

HEDDA. Yes, you *were* going a different way then, weren't you,
Judge?

BRACK. [*Laughing.*] Shame on you Mrs. Tesman! Well, then
—you and Tesman—? [*Sits down on sofa again.*]

HEDDA. Well, we happened to pass here one evening. Tesman,
poor fellow, was turning and twisting, not knowing what to
say, so I took pity on my poor philosopher—

BRACK. [*Smiles doubtfully.*] You—really! H'm—

HEDDA. Yes, I really did, I took pity on him—and to help him
along I was foolish enough to say I should simply love to
live in this villa.

BRACK. No more than that?

HEDDA. Not that evening.

BRACK. But afterwards?

HEDDA. Afterwards my foolishness was not without conse-
quences, my dear Judge.

BRACK. That happens all too often, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secre-
tary Falk's villa that first started the sympathy between
George Tesman and me. From that sprung our *engagement*
and our *marriage*, and our *wedding journey*—and all the rest
of it. So I suppose, my dear Judge, I could almost say—as
you make your bed so you must lie.

BRACK. This is priceless! So—you really didn't care a rap about
the villa?

HEDDA. No, heaven knows I didn't.

BRACK. But surely now, that we have made it all so cosy and attractive for you—

HEDDA. To me the rooms smell of lavender and dried rose leaves— But perhaps Aunt Julia has brought that scent with her—

BRACK. [*Laughing.*] I should rather say it was a legacy from the late Mrs. Falk.

HEDDA. Yes, there is an odor of decay about it. It reminds me of flowers the day after the ball. [*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him.*] Oh, my dear Judge, you can't imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

BRACK. But why shouldn't you find some sort of vocation, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. A vocation? That should attract me?

BRACK. Yes, if possible.

HEDDA. What sort of vocation should *that* be? I often wonder whether—[*Breaking off.*] But that would never do either.

BRACK. What were you thinking? Do tell me!

HEDDA. I was wondering whether I could get Tesman into politics.

BRACK. [*Laughing.*] Tesman? No really, political life is the last thing for him—it is not at all in his line.

HEDDA. I believe you're right. But if I could get him into it all the same—

BRACK. Why? What satisfaction could you find in that? If he is not fitted for that sort of life, why should you want to drive him into it?

HEDDA. Because I am bored, I tell you. [*After a pause.*] So you think it quite out of the question that Tesman should ever become secretary of state?

BRACK. Yes; remember, my dear Mrs. Tesman, to get such a position he would have to be a fairly rich man.

HEDDA. Yes, there you are—money, always money. It is this genteel poverty that makes life so unbearable—so utterly ludicrous.

BRACK. Now, I should say the fault lies elsewhere.

HEDDA. Where, then?

BRACK. In the fact that you have never been really stirred by anything in life.

HEDDA. Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK. Yes, if you like—. But perhaps it will come.

HEDDA. [*Tossing her head.*] Oh, you're thinking about this miserable professorship! But that is Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shall not waste a thought on that.

BRACK. No, no, I dare say not. But suppose now that you should find yourself faced with what people call—in solemn language, a grave responsibility—[*Smiling.*] A *new* responsibility, Mrs. Tesman? [*Slowly and with insinuation.*]

HEDDA. [*Angrily.*] Be quiet! [*Rising.*] Nothing of that sort will ever happen to me.

BRACK. [*Warily.*] We will speak of this again a year from now—at the very latest.

HEDDA. [*Curtly.*] That sort of thing doesn't appeal to me, Judge. No responsibilities for me.

BRACK. Are you so unlike the majority of women that you turn away from the duties which—

HEDDA. [*Beside the glass door turns and faces him suddenly.*] Be quiet, I tell you! I often think that there is only one thing in the world I am really fitted for.

BRACK. [*Drawing near to her.*] And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA. [*Stands looking out.*] Boring myself to death. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks towards the inner room and laughs.*] Yes, I thought so! Here comes the Professor.

BRACK. [*Softly, in a tone of warning.*] Now, now, now, Mrs. Tesman.

[GEORGE TESMAN, dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room.]

TESMAN. Has no message come from Eilert Lovborg? Eh?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Then he will be here presently, you will see.

BRACK. Do you really think he will come?

TESMAN. Yes, I am almost sure of it. What you told us this morning can only have been a rumor.

BRACK. Do you think so?

TESMAN. At any rate, Aunt Julia said she didn't believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Fancy that!

BRACK. Well, then, everything is all right.

TESMAN. [*Placing his hat and gloves on a chair on the right.*]

Yes, but I really ought to wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK. We have plenty of time. My guests won't arrive before seven or half-past.

TESMAN. Meanwhile we can keep Hedda company and see what happens. Eh?

HEDDA. And if the worst comes to the worst Mr. Lovborg can remain here with me.

BRACK. What do you mean by the worst?

HEDDA. If he won't go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN. [*Looks dubiously at HEDDA troubled, slowly.*] But Hedda dear, do you think it would be quite the thing for him to remain with you. Eh? Remember Aunt Julia isn't coming.

HEDDA. No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN. Oh, yes—that will be all right.

BRACK. [*Smiling.*] And that would perhaps be the best thing for him.

HEDDA. Why?

BRACK. Well, you know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to sneer at my little bachelor parties. You said they were only suitable for men of the strictest principles.

HEDDA. But no doubt Mr. Lovborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner—

[*BERTA appears at the hall door.*]

BERTA. There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am.

[*BRACK crosses to window.*]

HEDDA. Well, show him in.

TESMAN. [*Softly.*] I am sure it is he. Fancy that!

[*EILERT LOVBORG enters from the hall. He is tall and slim; of the same age as TESMAN, but looks older and rather worn. His hair dark brown. His face long and pale, with patches of color on the cheekbones. He is dressed in a well-cut black suit, quite new. He wears gloves and a soft hat. He stops*

near the door and makes a quick bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed.]

TESMAN. [*Goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the hand.*]

Welcome, my dear Eilert. At last we meet again.

EILERT LOVBORG. [*Speaks in a subdued voice.*] Thanks for your letter, Tesman. [*Approaching HEDDA.*] I hope you will shake hands with me too, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA.³ [*Taking his hand.*] I am delighted to see you Mr.

Lovborg. [*With a movement of her hand.*] I don't know whether you two gentlemen—

LOVBORG. [*Bowing slightly.*] Judge Brack, I believe?

BRACK. [*Also bowing.*] Yes—I have had the pleasure—a few years ago.

TESMAN. [*To LOVBORG with his hands on his shoulders.*] And now Eilert, you must make yourself at home. Mustn't he, Hedda?—I hear you are going to settle in town again. Eh?

LOVBORG. Yes, I am.

TESMAN. Well I'm glad of that! I have just bought your new book, but I haven't had time to read it yet.

LOVBORG. [*Puts his hat on table back of sofa.*] You may spare yourself the trouble.

TESMAN. Why?

LOVBORG. Because it is pretty thin stuff.

TESMAN. Just fancy! How can you say that?

BRACK. It has been very much praised, I hear.

LOVBORG. That was exactly what I wanted, so I put nothing into the book that anyone would take exception to.

BRACK. Very wise of you.

TESMAN. But my dear Eilert—

LOVBORG. For now I mean to make a fresh start and win a position for myself—

TESMAN. [*Slightly embarrassed.*] Ah—so; that is what you wish to do. Eh?

LOVBORG. [*Smiling. Lays down his hat and draws a package wrapped in paper from his coat pocket.*] But when this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it; for this is a real book. Every ounce of my true self is in this.

TESMAN. Indeed! What is it about?

LOVBORG. It is the sequel.

TESMAN. The sequel of what?

LOVBORG. Of the book.

TESMAN. Of the new book?

LOVBORG. Yes, of course.

TESMAN. Why, my dear Eilert, it comes right down to our time, doesn't it?

LOVBORG. Yes; but this deals with the future.

TESMAN. With the future! But good heavens, we know nothing about the future.

LOVBORG. There is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the package.*] Look here—

TESMAN. Why, that is not your handwriting.

LOVBORG. I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages.*] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilizing forces of the future, and the second—[*Running through the pages towards the end.*]—forecasts the probable lines of development.

TESMAN. How odd! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

HEDDA. [*At fireplace with a laugh. BRACK looks at her.*] No,—I daresay.

LOVBORG. [*Replacing the manuscript in its paper, laying the parcel on the table.*] I brought it thinking I might read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN. That was very good of you, Eilert, but this evening—[*Looking at BRACK.*] I don't quite see how we can manage it—[*Hesitating, embarrassed.*]

LOVBORG. Well then, some other time. There is no hurry.

BRACK. [*Crossing to LOVBORG.*] I must tell you Mr. Lovborg—I am giving a little party this evening—in honor of Tesman, you know—

LOVBORG. [*Looking for his hat.*] Oh—then I won't detain you.

BRACK. No, but listen—won't you give me the pleasure of your company—

LOVBORG. [*In a firm tone of voice.*] No, I can't—thank you very much.

BRACK. Oh, nonsense—do come! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure you we shall have a jolly time, as—as Mrs. Tesman says.

LOVBORG. I am quite sure of that—but nevertheless—

BRACK. And then you might bring your manuscript and read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room all to yourselves.

TESMAN. Yes, think of that, Eilert,—why shouldn't you do that? Eh?

HEDDA. [*Interrupting.*] But, Tesman, if Mr. Lovborg doesn't want to go! I am sure Mr. Lovborg would much rather remain here and have supper with me.

LOVBORG. [*Looking at her.*] With you Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. And with Mrs. Elvsted.

LOVBORG. Ah—[*Lightly.*] I saw her for a moment today.

HEDDA. Did you? Well, she is coming this evening. So you are almost bound to remain, Mr. Lovborg, or she will have no one to see her home.

LOVBORG. That is true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case, I will remain.

HEDDA. Good, then I shall give one or two orders to the servant. [*She goes to the hall door and rings. BERTA enters. HEDDA talks to her in a whisper and points towards the inner room. BERTA nods and goes out again.*]

TESMAN. [*At the same time, to LOVBORG.*] Tell me Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you are going to lecture about?

LOVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. They told me at the book store that you are going to give a course of lectures here this autumn.

LOVBORG. Yes, that is my intention. I hope you don't mind.

TESMAN. No—of course not, but—

LOVBORG. I quite understand that perhaps it may upset you—

TESMAN. [*Rather downcast.*] Oh, I can't expect that you, out of consideration for me, should—

LOVBORG. But I shall wait until you have received your appointment.

TESMAN. Will you wait? Yes, but—are you not going to compete with me. Eh?

LOVBORG. No; it is only the moral victory I care about.

TESMAN. Why, bless my soul—then Aunt Julia was right after all. I knew it all the time! Hedda! Just fancy! Eilert Lovborg is not going to stand in our way.

HEDDA. [*Curtly.*] Our way? Pray leave me out of it. [*BERTA is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table. BERTA goes out.*]

TESMAN. [*At the same time.*] And you, Judge—what do you say to all this?

BRACK. Well, I say that a moral victory may be all very fine, but—

TESMAN. Yes, certainly. But all the same—

HEDDA. [*Looking at TESMAN with a cold smile.*] You stand there looking absolutely thunderstruck—

TESMAN. Yes—I almost believe I am.

HEDDA. [*Pointing towards the inner room.*] Gentlemen, won't you take a glass of cold punch?

BRACK. [*Looking at his watch.*] A sort of stirrup-cup, you mean? Yes, that is not a bad idea.

TESMAN. A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! Now that a heavy weight has been lifted off my mind—

HEDDA. [*Rising.*] You'll join them, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. [*Shaking his head.*] No, thank you; nothing for me.

BRACK. Why, surely cold punch is not poison.

LOVBORG. Perhaps not for everyone.

HEDDA. Well then, Mr. Lovborg and I can have a chat!

TESMAN. Yes, Hedda dear, please do.

[*He and BRACK go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes while carrying on a lively conversation during what follows. EILERT LOVBORG remains standing. HEDDA goes to the writing table.*]

HEDDA [*Raising her voice a little.*] Do you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lovborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home?

[*She takes up an album and places it on the table beside the sofa, in the further corner of which she seats herself. EILERT LOVBORG approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself on her left with his back towards the inner room.*]

HEDDA. [*Opening the album.*] Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lovborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath, "The Ortler group near Meran."

LOVBORG. [*Who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly:*] Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA. [*Glancing hastily at him.*] Sh!

LOVBORG. [*As before.*] Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA. [*Looking at the album.*] That was my name in the old days—when you and I knew each other.

LOVBORG. Then I must learn never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

HEDDA. [*Still turning the pages.*] Yes, I'm afraid you'll have to. The sooner the better, I should say.

LOVBORG. [*In a tone of indignation.*] Hedda Gabler married! And married to—George Tesman!

HEDDA. Yes—such is life!

LOVBORG. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you throw yourself away?

HEDDA. [*Looks sharply at him.*] Stop it! I won't have you say such things.

LOVBORG. Why not?

[TESMAN comes into the room and goes towards the sofa.]

HEDDA. [*Hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone.*]

And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo, Mr. Lovborg. Just look at these peaks. [*Looks affectionately up at TESMAN.*]

What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN. Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA. Yes, that's it!—Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lovborg.

TESMAN. Hedda dear,—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring you a little punch after all—for yourself at any rate. Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

TESMAN. Very well.

[*He goes into the inner room and out to the right.*]

[BRACK sits in the inner room and keeps an eye from time to time on HEDDA and LOVBORG.]

LOVBORG. [*Softly, as before.*] Answer me Hedda—how could you do it?

HEDDA. [*Apparently absorbed in the album.*] If you go on saying "Hedda," I won't talk to you.

LOVBORG. Can't I say Hedda even when we are alone?

HEDDA. No. You may *think* it, but you must not *say* it.

LOVBORG. Ah, I understand. You think it hurts your love for George Tesman.

HEDDA. [*Glances at him and smiles.*] Love? How funny you are.

LOVBORG. Is it not love then?

HEDDA. But, all the same, there's no unfaithfulness, remember!

LOVBORG. Hedda—answer me just one thing—

HEDDA. Hush!

[TESMAN *enters with a small tray from the inner room.*]

TESMAN. Here you are! Doesn't this look tempting? [*He puts the tray on the table.*]

HEDDA. Why do you bring it yourself, George?

TESMAN. [*Filling the glasses.*] Because I think it is such fun to wait on you.

HEDDA. But you have filled both glasses. Mr. Lovborg said he wouldn't have any—

TESMAN. I know, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here; won't she?

HEDDA. Oh, yes, of course, Mrs. Elvsted—

TESMAN. Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA. We were so absorbed in these photographs. [*Shows him a picture.*] Do you remember this little village?

TESMAN. Yes, it is the one just below the Brenner Pass. It was there we spent the night—

HEDDA [*Quickly interrupting.*—and met that lively party of tourists.

TESMAN. Yes, that was the place. Fancy—if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! Eh? [*He returns to the inner room and sits down beside BRACK.*]

LOVBORG. Answer me this one thing, Hedda—

HEDDA. Well?

LOVBORG. Are you sure there was no love in your feeling for me? Not the slightest touch of love?

HEDDA. I wonder— To me it seemed as though we were just two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. [*Smilingly.*] You especially were frankness itself.

LOVBORG. It was you who made me so.

HEDDA. As I look back upon it all, I think there was really

something beautiful—something fascinating—something daring, yes daring, in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living soul suspected.

LOVBORG. Indeed there was. Do you remember, Hedda, when I used to come to your home in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his paper—with his back towards us—

HEDDA. And we two on the corner sofa—

LOVBORG. Always with the same illustrated paper before us—

HEDDA. We didn't have an album.

LOVBORG. And do you remember, Hedda—when I confessed to you—when I told you all about myself—things nobody else knew—described how I raised the devil by day and night—let you know all my innermost thoughts— How did you make me talk like that, Hedda?—By what power?

HEDDA. Power? [*Definitely caught by that word. Power is something she would so love to have.*]

LOVBORG. Yes, how else can you explain it—and all those roundabout questions you used to ask!

HEDDA. Questions you understood—so perfectly.

LOVBORG. How could you bring yourself to question me like that—so frankly?

HEDDA. In a roundabout way, if you please.

LOVBORG. Yes, but frankly nevertheless. Cross-question me about—about such special things?

HEDDA. And how could you bring yourself to answer, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. That is just what I can't understand. But tell me, Hedda, don't you think there was love at the bottom of it all—don't you think making me confess like that, you felt somehow as if you were washing away my sins?

HEDDA. No. Not quite.

LOVBORG. What was it then?

HEDDA. Do you think it so difficult to understand that a young girl—when it can be done—without anyone knowing—

LOVBORG. Well?

HEDDA.—Should want to have a peep into a world that—

LOVBORG. That—?

HEDDA. She is not supposed to know anything about?

LOVBORG. So that is what it was?

HEDDA. [*Looking straight at him.*] Yes, partly—at any rate.

LOVBORG. So our comradeship grew out of your craving for life.

But why did it end?

HEDDA. The fault was yours.

LOVBORG. It was you who broke with me.

HEDDA. Yes, when our friendship threatened to become too intimate. Aren't you ashamed of yourself Eilert Lovborg! How could you have thought of wronging your trusting comrade?

LOVBORG. [*Clenching his hands.*] Oh, why did you not do as you said? Why didn't you shoot me?

HEDDA. Because [*Long pause. After "Because" she might be about to say anything. Then quickly and incisively.*] I have such a dread of scandal.

LOVBORG. Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

HEDDA. A terrible coward. [*Changing her tone.*] But, after all, it was a lucky thing for you, for you have found ample consolation at the Elvsteds'.

LOVBORG. I know that Thea has confided in you.

HEDDA. I suppose you have confided to her something about us?

LOVBORG.⁴ Not a word. She is too stupid to understand that sort of thing.

HEDDA. [*Eagerly.*] Stupid?

LOVBORG. Yes, about matters of that sort.

HEDDA. And I am a coward. [*Bends over towards him without looking him in the face and says softly:*] But now I will confess something to you.

LOVBORG. [*Eagerly.*] Well?

HEDDA. The reason why I dared not shoot you.

LOVBORG. Yes!

HEDDA.—That was not my most arrant cowardice—that evening.

LOVBORG. [*Looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately.*] Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship! You and I—! After all, it was your craving for life—

HEDDA.⁵ [*Softly, with a sharp glance.*] Take care! Believe nothing of the sort! [*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by BERTA.*] [*HEDDA closes the album with a bang and calls out smilingly:*] Ah, at last! My darling

Thea,—do come in. [MRS. ELVSTED *enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*] Darling Thea—I can't tell you how eagerly I have been expecting you!

[MRS. ELVSTED, *in passing, exchanges salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room. She goes up to the table and shakes hands with HEDDA. EILERT LOVBORG has risen. He and MRS. ELVSTED greet each other with a silent nod.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. Do you think I should go in and speak to your husband?

HEDDA. No, don't do that. Leave those two alone. They will soon be going.

MRS. ELVSTED. Are they going out?

HEDDA. Yes, to a gay party.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quickly to LOVBORG.*] Are you going too?

LOVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Mr. Lovborg will remain with us.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how nice it is to be here.

HEDDA. No, little Thea, don't sit down there. Be a good girl and come here. I will sit between you.

MRS. ELVSTED. Just as you like. [*She goes around the table and seats herself on the sofa at HEDDA's right. LOVBORG takes the same chair as before.*]

LOVBORG. [*After a short pause, to HEDDA.*] Isn't she lovely to look at?

HEDDA. [*Lightly stroking her hair.*] Only to look at?

LOVBORG. Yes! For she and I—we are two real comrades—we have absolute faith in each other—we can talk with perfect frankness—

HEDDA. Not in a roundabout way, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. Well—

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Softly, clinging close to HEDDA.*] Oh, how happy I am Hedda! Just imagine, he says I have inspired him in his work.

HEDDA. [*Looks at him with a smile. Pinches THEA's cheek.*]

H'm! Does he really dear?

LOVBORG. And then she shows such courage, Mrs. Tesman!

MRS. ELVSTED. Good heavens—courage!

LOVBORG. Yes, tremendous courage—where your comrade is concerned.

HEDDA. Ah yes—courage! If one only had that!

LOVBORG. What then?

HEDDA. Then life would perhaps be liveable, after all. [*With a sudden change of tone.*] Now, my dearest Thea, you must have a glass of nice cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, thank you; I never take anything of that kind.

HEDDA. Well, then—you, Mr. Lovborg.

LOVBORG. Nor I, thank you.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he doesn't either.

HEDDA. [*Looks fixedly at him.*] But if I ask you?

LOVBORG. It would be of no use.

HEDDA. [*Laughing.*] Poor me—I have no power over you at all then?

LOVBORG. Not in that respect.

HEDDA. But, seriously, I think you're wrong to refuse—for your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED. Why, Hedda—!

LOVBORG. Yes? Why?

HEDDA.⁶ Or rather for the sake of appearances.

LOVBORG. Indeed!

HEDDA. Yes—people might suspect that in your heart of hearts—you weren't quite sure—quite confident of yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Softly.*] Oh please don't, Hedda—

LOVBORG. People may suspect whatever they like.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Joyfully.*] Yes, let them!

HEDDA. I saw it plainly in Judge Brack's face a moment ago.

LOVBORG. What did you see?

HEDDA. His contemptuous smile when you didn't dare go with him into the inner room.

LOVBORG. Didn't dare? Of course I preferred to stay here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED. What could be more natural, Hedda?

HEDDA. But how could the Judge know that? And I noticed, too, that he smiled and looked at Tesman when you refused the invitation to his wretched little party.

LOVBORG. Didn't dare, did you say—I didn't dare?

HEDDA. No, I don't. But that is how Judge Brack understood it.

LOVBORG. Well, let him.

HEDDA. Then you are not going with them?

LOVBORG. No, I will stay here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, Hedda, of course he will.

HEDDA. [*Smiles and nods approvingly to LOVBORG.*] Firm as a rock! Faithful to all good principles now and forever. That is how a man should be. [*Speaks to MRS. ELVSTED and caresses her.*] What did I tell you this morning, Thea, when you were so distressed?

LOVBORG. [*In surprise.*] Distressed?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Terrified.*] Hedda, oh Hedda—

HEDDA. There—you see—you have not the slightest reason to be so worried or upset—[*Interrupting herself.*] Well—now we can all three enjoy ourselves.

LOVBORG. [*Rising.*] I don't understand the meaning of all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, my God, Hedda! What are you saying—what are you doing?

HEDDA. Please don't get so excited. That horrid Judge is watching you.

LOVBORG. So you say she was worried and upset on my account?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Softly and piteously.*] Oh, Hedda—you have ruined everything.

LOVBORG. [*Looks fixedly at her for a moment; his face is distorted.*] So that was my comrade's trust and faith?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Imploringly.*] Oh, my dearest friend—do listen to me—

LOVBORG. [*Takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips and says in a low husky voice:*] Your health, Thea. [*Empties the glass, puts it down and takes a second.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Softly.*] Oh, Hedda, Hedda. How could you do this?

HEDDA. I do it? I? Are you crazy?

LOVBORG. And your health too, Mrs. Tesman. Thank you for the truth. Long live the truth. [*He empties the glass and is about to refill it.*]

HEDDA. [*Lays her hand on his arm.*] Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you are going to a party.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no!

HEDDA. Sh! They're watching us.

LOVBORG. [*Putting down the glass.*] Now Thea, tell me the truth—

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

LOVBORG. Did your husband know anything about your following me?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh, Hedda—do you hear what he is asking me?

LOVBORG. Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself who urged you to come. I suppose he wanted my help in his office! Or was it at the card-table he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Softly, in agony.*] Oh, Eilert, Eilert!

LOVBORG. [*Seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it.*] I will drink to the old Sheriff, too!

HEDDA. [*Preventing him.*] No more now. Remember, you have to read your manuscript to Tesman.

LOVBORG. [*Calmly, putting down the glass.*] Oh, it is stupid of me Thea—to behave like this. Don't be angry with me my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—as well as all the others—that even if I have been down and out, I am on my feet again. Thanks to you, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Radiant with joy.*] Ah, heaven be praised—! [*In the meantime, BRACK looks at his watch. He and TESMAN get up and come into the drawing-room. BRACK takes his hat and coat.*]

BRACK. Well, Mrs. Tesman. It is time to go.

HEDDA. I suppose it is.

LOVBORG. [*Rising.*] I will come, too, Judge.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Softly and imploringly.*] Oh, Lovborg, don't go.

HEDDA. [*Pinching her arm.*] Sh! They can hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*With a suppressed shriek.*] Ow!

LOVBORG. [*To BRACK.*] You were kind enough to invite me.

BRACK. You have changed your mind?

LOVBORG. Yes.

BRACK. I am delighted.

LOVBORG. [*To TESMAN, putting the parcel of manuscript in his pocket.*] I should like to show you one or two things before the manuscript goes to the printers.

TESMAN. Fancy! How splendid. But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home?

HEDDA. Oh, we can manage that somehow.

LOVBORG. [*Looking towards the ladies.*] Mrs. Elvsted? Of course, I'll come back and fetch her. Around ten o'clock Mrs. Tesman. Will that do?

HEDDA. Certainly. That will be splendid.

TESMAN. Well, then, that's all right. But you must not expect me so early, Hedda.

HEDDA. Oh, you may stay as long as you like. [*She goes upstage and joins BRACK and TESMAN leaving LOVBORG and THEA for a second isolated.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Trying to conceal her anxiety.*] Well, then, Mr. Lovborg, I shall remain here until you come.

LOVBORG. [*With his hat in his hands.*] Yes, please do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Well, gentlemen, shall we start? I hope we are going to have a jolly time—as a certain fair lady puts it.

HEDDA. If only the fair lady could be present unseen—

BRACK. Why unseen?

HEDDA. In order to share a little in your unbridled fun, Judge.

BRACK. [*Laughing.*] I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

TESMAN. [*Also laughing.*] Come, you are a nice one Hedda! Fancy that!

BRACK. Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LOVBORG. [*Bowing.*] About ten o'clock, then.

HEDDA. Yes, Mr. Lovborg.

[BRACK, LOVBORG and TESMAN go out by the hall door. At the same time BERTA enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the drawing-room table; she goes out by the way she came.]

MRS. ELVSTED. Hedda, Hedda. What will come of all this?

HEDDA. At ten o'clock he will be here. I can see him now—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless—

MRS. ELVSTED. I hope you are right.

HEDDA. And then—then he will have regained confidence in himself. Then, he will be a free man forever and ever.

MRS. ELVSTED. Pray God he may return as you see him.

HEDDA. He will come as I see him—and in no other way. [*Rises and approaches THEA.*] You may doubt him as much as you please; I believe in him.

MRS. ELVSTED. What is behind all this, Hedda?

HEDDA. For once in my life I want *power* to shape a human destiny.

MRS. ELVSTED. Haven't you got that?

HEDDA. No, I haven't—I have never had that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Not even in your husband's case?

HEDDA. Do you think that is worth bothering about? If you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made you so rich! [*Takes her by the hair.*] I really think I must burn your hair off after all.

MRS. ELVSTED. Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda.

BERTA. [*In the middle doorway.*] Supper's ready, ma'am.

HEDDA. [*Changed voice.*] Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, please let me go. I would rather go home alone, now, at once.

HEDDA.⁷ Don't be silly! First you must have a cup of tea, and then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lovborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair. [*She drags MRS. ELVSTED, almost by force, towards the middle doorway.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

The room at the Tesmans'.

The curtains are drawn across the doorway into the inner room and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has been a fire which is now nearly burned out.

MRS. ELVSTED, *wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-stool, sits in the arm-chair close to the stove.*
HEDDA, *fully dressed, lies sleeping on the sofa. She has a blanket over her.*

MRS. ELVSTED. [*After a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair and listens eagerly. She sinks back again, moaning to herself.*] Not yet!—Oh God—Oh God—not yet! [*BERTA cautiously opens the hall door; she has a letter in her hand. MRS. ELVSTED turns and whispers eagerly.*] Well—has anyone come?

BERTA. [*Softly.*] Yes; a girl just brought this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Quickly holding out her hand.*] A letter! Give it to me!

BERTA. No, it's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh.

BERTA. Miss Tesman's maid brought it. I will put it on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, do.

BERTA. [*Laying down the letter.*] I think I had better put out the lamp.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. I suppose it is almost daylight.

BERTA. [*Putting out the lamp.*] It is daylight, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Really. Broad daylight and nobody has returned yet—!

BERTA. Lord bless you, ma'am. I thought something of that kind would happen.

MRS. ELVSTED. Did you?

BERTA. Yes, when I saw that a certain person was in town again—and that he dragged the others with him, I knew what that meant for we used to hear enough about that gentleman.

MRS. ELVSTED. Don't speak so loud. You will wake Mrs. Tesman.

BERTA. [*Looks towards the sofa and sighs.*] Yes, you are right.

Let her sleep, poor thing. Shall I put some wood on the fire, ma'am?

MRS. ELVSTED. Please—don't trouble.

BERTA. Oh, very well. [*She goes softly out by the hall door.*]

[*HEDDA is awakened by the noise of shutting the door, and looks up.*]

HEDDA. What's that?

MRS. ELVSTED. It was only the maid—

HEDDA. [*Looking about her.*] Oh, we're in here—are we! Yes, now I remember! [*Sits up on the sofa, stretches herself and rubs her eyes.*] What time is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks at her watch.*] It is past seven.

HEDDA. When did Tesman come home?

MRS. ELVSTED. He hasn't come.

HEDDA. Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Rising.*] No one has come.

HEDDA. And we were silly enough to sit up waiting until four in the morning—

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Wringing her hands.*] Yes—and waiting with such terrible anxiety.

HEDDA. [*Yawns, and says with her hand before her mouth:*]

Well, we might have spared ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED. Did you finally get a little sleep?

HEDDA. Oh yes; I believe I slept pretty well. Didn't you?

MRS. ELVSTED. I couldn't—I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

HEDDA. [*Rises and goes towards her.*] There, there, there! Why be so alarmed? It's easy to see what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED. What? Tell me.

HEDDA. Simply that they stayed very late at Judge Brack's.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I suppose that's it. But all the same—

HEDDA. And then, probably Tesman didn't care to come home

and wake us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughing.*] Perhaps he was in no condition to show himself after the famous party.

MRS. ELVSTED. But where can he have gone?

HEDDA. He may have gone to his aunts' and slept there. They keep his old room ready for him.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he can't be with them; for a letter has just come from Miss Tesman. There it is.

HEDDA. Indeed! [*Looks at the address.*] Yes, I see it is Aunt Julia's handwriting. Well then, he remained at Judge Brack's. And as for Eilert Lovborg—he is sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh Hedda, you are saying things you don't mean at all.

HEDDA. You really are a little fool, Thea!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I suppose I am—

HEDDA. And how dreadfully tired you look.

MRS. ELVSTED. Indeed I am dreadfully tired.

HEDDA. Well, then, why not do as I tell you? Please go into my room and lie down for a little.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

HEDDA. Oh yes you would.

MRS. ELVSTED. But your husband is sure to be back soon; and of course I want to know at once.

HEDDA. I will let you know the moment he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Is that a promise, Hedda?

HEDDA. Yes, you can count on me. Meanwhile, go in and have a good sleep.

MRS. ELVSTED.¹ Thanks, I will try.

[*She goes out through the inner room. HEDDA goes up to the glass door and draws back the curtains. Broad daylight streams into the room. Then she takes a little hand glass from the writing table, looks at herself and arranges her hair. She goes to the hall door and presses the bell. BERTA presently appears at the hall door.*]

BERTA. Did you ring, ma'am?

HEDDA. Yes; please put some more wood in the stove—I am shivering.

BERTA. Certainly, ma'am. I will make up the fire at once. [*She*

rakes the fire and lays a piece of wood on it; then stops and listens.] That is the front door-bell, ma'am.

HEDDA. Then answer the bell. I will look after the fire.

BERTA. It'll soon burn up, ma'am.

[She goes out by the hall door. HEDDA kneels on the foot-stool and puts more wood in the stove. After a short pause, GEORGE TESMAN enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on tiptoe towards the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.]

HEDDA. *[At the stove, without looking up.]* Good morning.

TESMAN. *[Turns.]* Hedda! *[Approaching her.]* Good heavens—
—are you up so early? Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I am up very early today.

TESMAN. And I thought you were still sound asleep. Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Sh! Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is lying down in my room.

TESMAN. Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA. Yes, of course—since no one came to fetch her.

TESMAN. No—I suppose not.

HEDDA. *[Closes the door of the stove and rises.]* Well, did you enjoy yourselves at Judge Brack's?

TESMAN. Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA. No, that would never occur to me. But I asked if you enjoyed yourselves?

TESMAN. Oh, yes—for once in a way. Especially at first—for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early. Fancy that! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make; so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA. *[Seating herself by the table on the right.]* Well? Tell me, then—

TESMAN. *[Sitting on a foot-stool near the stove.]* Oh Hedda, you can't conceive what a book it will be. I believe it is one of the most remarkable things that has ever been written.
—fancy that!

HEDDA. I'm really not interested.

TESMAN. But you know, Hedda, I have a confession to make.

When he had finished reading, a horrid feeling came over me.

HEDDA. A horrid feeling?

TESMAN. Yes, I felt jealous of Eilert for having been able to write such a book. Just think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, yes!

TESMAN. But it's pitiful when you realize, that Eilert Lovborg, with all his gifts, should be so utterly irresponsible.

HEDDA. You mean he has more temperament than any of you?

TESMAN. No, I don't mean that—I mean he is simply incapable of moderation.

HEDDA. Well—what happened in the end?

TESMAN. I am afraid Hedda, there's only one word to describe it. It was an orgy.

HEDDA. Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN. Vine-leaves? No, I didn't see any vine-leaves. But he made a long rambling speech in honor of the woman who had inspired him in his work. That was the phrase he used.

HEDDA. Did he mention her name?

TESMAN. No, he didn't. But I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You will see.

HEDDA. Well—where did you part from him?

TESMAN. On the way to town. We late ones all left together, and Brack came with us to get a breath of fresh air. Then we decided to take Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

HEDDA. I dare say.

TESMAN. And now comes the strange part of it, Hedda—or I should rather say the sad part of it. Well, I am almost ashamed—on Eilert's account—to tell you—

HEDDA. Oh, go on—!

TESMAN. Well, as we were getting near town, you see, I happened to drop a little behind the others. Only for a minute of two—fancy that!

HEDDA. Yes, yes, but—?

TESMAN. And then, as I hurried after them, what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

HEDDA. How should I know?

TESMAN. You mustn't speak of it to a living soul, Hedda; do you hear? Promise me—for Eilert's sake. [*He draws a parcel*

wrapped in paper from his coat pocket.] Fancy, dear—I found this.

HEDDA. Isn't that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN. Yes—can you believe it—his precious irreplaceable manuscript! He had lost it and hadn't even noticed it. Isn't it sad, Hedda, that—

HEDDA.² But why didn't you give it back to him at once?

TESMAN. I didn't dare trust him with it in the condition he was in.

HEDDA. Did you tell any of the others that you had found it?

TESMAN. No; I didn't. Surely you can understand that for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

HEDDA. So no one knows that Eilert Lovborg's manuscript is in your possession?

TESMAN. No; and no one must know it.

HEDDA. What did you say to him afterwards?

TESMAN. I didn't talk to him again; for when we got into town, he and two of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Indeed? They must have taken him home then.

TESMAN. Yes, I suppose so. And Brack left us too.

HEDDA. And what have you been doing with yourself since?

TESMAN. Well, some of us went home with one of the fellows and took our morning coffee there—or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—eh? But now when I have had a little rest and poor Eilert has had time to recover himself a bit, I must take this back to him.

HEDDA. [*Holds out her hand for the parcel.*] No; don't give it to him—not right away I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN. Oh, my dearest Hedda, I can't do that. I really dare not.

HEDDA. You daren't?

TESMAN. Just imagine how desperate he will be when he wakes up and finds that the manuscript is lost. There is no copy of it—fancy! He told me so.

HEDDA. [*Looking searchingly at him.*] Can't such a thing be reproduced—written over again?

TESMAN. No, I don't think that would be possible—for the inspiration you see—

HEDDA. Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that. . . .
[*Lightly.*] But, by the way; here is a letter for you.

TESMAN. Fancy—!

HEDDA. [*Handing it to him.*] It came early this morning. A few minutes ago.

TESMAN. It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? [*He lays the package on the other foot-stool, opens the letter, looks at it and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying.

HEDDA. Well, we were prepared for that.

TESMAN. And that if I want to see her again, I must hurry. I'll run in to see them at once.

HEDDA. [*Suppressing a smile.*] Will you run?

TESMAN. Oh, my dearest Hedda—I wish you could make up your mind to come with me! Just think!

HEDDA. [*Rises and says wearily.*] No, no; don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness or death. I loathe everything that is ugly.

TESMAN. Well, well then—[*Bustling around.*] My hat—my overcoat—? Oh, in the hall—I do hope I won't be too late, Hedda. Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, if you run—

[*BERTA appears at the hall door.*]

BERTA. Judge Brack is at the door and wishes to know if he may come in?

TESMAN. At this hour. No, I can't possibly see him.

HEDDA. But I can. [*To BERTA.*] Ask the Judge to come in.

[*BERTA goes out. Quickly, whispering.*] The parcel, Tesman!
[*She snatches it from the stool.*]

TESMAN. Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA. No, no. I will keep it until you come back. [*She goes to the writing table and places it in the bookcase.* TESMAN appears in a hurry, trying to get his gloves on. JUDGE BRACK enters from the hall nodding to him.] Well, I must say you are an early bird.

BRACK. Yes, indeed I am. [*To TESMAN.*] Are you on the move too?

TESMAN. Yes, I must rush off to my Aunt's. Fancy, Aunt Rina is dying—poor thing.

BRACK. Dear me, is she? Then don't let me detain you. Every moment may be precious.

TESMAN. Yes, I must really rush—good-bye, good-bye! [*He goes quickly out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA. [*Approaching.*] I hear the party last night was more than usually jolly.

BRACK. Yes, I'm afraid so. I haven't been out of my clothes, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Haven't you either?

BRACK. No. What has Tesman told you of last night's adventures?

HEDDA. Only some boring tale about going somewhere and having coffee.

BRACK. Yes, I have heard about that coffee party all ready—but I don't think Eilert Lovborg was with them.

HEDDA. No, they had taken him home first.

BRACK. Was Tesman among them?

HEDDA. No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK. [*Smiling.*] George Tesman is really a naïve creature, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Yes, Heaven knows, he is. But what is there behind all this?

BRACK. There's this—that—

HEDDA. Do sit down, dear Judge, and tell me all about it. [*She seats herself to the left of the table. BRACK sits alongside of the table.*] Now, then—?

BRACK. You see, I had special reasons for keeping track of my guests—or rather some of my guests—last night.

HEDDA. Of Eilert Lovborg amongst others I suppose?

BRACK. Frankly—yes.

HEDDA. Oh, Judge, this sounds quite thrilling—

BRACK. Have you heard where he and one or two of the others finished the night?

HEDDA. No. Do tell me, if it is not quite unmentionable.

BRACK. It is not at all unmentionable. Well, they turned up at an extremely gay party.

HEDDA. A very jolly one?

BRACK. A most jolly one—

HEDDA. Do tell me more about it, Judge—

BRACK. Lovborg, as well as the others, had been invited beforehand. I had heard all about it. But he had refused the invitation, for he has become a reformed character.

HEDDA. Thanks to the Elvsteds, yes. But he went after all?

BRACK. Well, you see, Mrs. Tesman, unfortunately it happened, that he became inspired last night—

HEDDA. Yes, I heard that he was inspired—

BRACK. Extremely so—and of course that made him change his mind; for, as you know, we men-folk are not always so firm in our principles as perhaps we should be.

HEDDA. I am sure you are an exception, Judge. But as to Lovborg—

BRACK. To make a long story short, he landed—ended up in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA. Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK. Yes, Mademoiselle Diana was giving a party to a select circle of her admirers and friends.

HEDDA. Is she a red-haired woman?

BRACK. Precisely.

HEDDA.³ A sort of singer?

BRACK. Yes, in her leisure moments. And moreover a mighty huntress of men—. You have no doubt heard of her, Mrs. Tesman. In the days of his glory Eilert Lovborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors.

HEDDA. But how did it all end?

BRACK. No very friendly fashion, it seems. They started most cordially, but finally came to blows.

HEDDA. Lovborg and she?

BRACK. Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him, declared that his pocket-book had disappeared—and other things as well. In short, he seems to have made a terrific row.

HEDDA. But how did it all end?

BRACK. It turned into a general scrimmage, in which the women as well as the men took part. Fortunately, the police at last appeared on the scene.

HEDDA. The police?

BRACK. Yes, I fancy it will prove an expensive amusement for Mr. Eilert—crazy fool that he is.

HEDDA. How?

BRACK. He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn the coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police-station with the rest.

HEDDA. How did you hear all this?

BRACK. From the police themselves.

HEDDA.⁴ [*Gazing straight before her.*] So that is what happened. Then after all he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK. Vine-leaves, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. [*Changing her tone.*] But tell me now, Judge—what is your real reason for tracking down Eilert Lovborg in this way?

BRACK. In the first place I am not indifferent to the fact that when he appears in the police-court it will be known that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA. Will the case come into court, then?

BRACK. Of course. However, I shouldn't have troubled much about that, only I thought that, as a friend of the family, it was my duty to give you and Tesman a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA. Why so?

BRACK. Because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

HEDDA. What makes you think so?

BRACK. Good heavens, Mrs. Tesman, we have eyes in our heads. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted will be in no hurry to leave town.

HEDDA. Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK. Not a single home. From now on, every respectable house will be closed to Eilert Lovborg.

HEDDA. And mine ought to be too, you mean?

BRACK. Yes. I admit it would be more than painful to me if he should have the right to come and go in your home as he liked; if this undesirable and superfluous person should force his way into—

HEDDA.⁵—Into the triangle?

BRACK. Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

HEDDA. [*Looks at him with a smile.*] You want to be cock-of-the-walk. That is your aim?

BRACK. [*Nods slowly, and lowers his voice.*] Yes—that is my aim, and for that I will fight with every weapon I can command!

HEDDA. [*Her smile vanishing.*] I wonder, when it comes to the point, Judge, if you aren't a rather dangerous person?

BRACK. Do you think so?

HEDDA.⁶ [*Gets up, crosses stage; breaks the situation.*] Yes, I begin to think so. And I am exceedingly glad that you have no sort of hold over me.

BRACK. [*Laughing equivocally.*] Well, well, Mrs. Tesman—perhaps you are right. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of?

HEDDA. Come, come now, Judge! That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK. [*Rising.*] Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be based upon mutual understanding.

HEDDA. There I agree with you.

BRACK. Well, now I have said all I had to say, I had better be going back to town. Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. [*He goes towards the glass door.*]

HEDDA. [*Rising.*] Are you going through the garden?

BRACK. Yes, it is a short cut for me.

HEDDA. And then it is the back way, too.

BRACK. Quite so. I have no objection to back ways. They are rather intriguing at times.

HEDDA. When there is shooting going on, you mean?

BRACK. [*In the doorway, laughing.*] Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

HEDDA. [*Also laughing.*] No. Especially if there's only one cock-of-the-walk. [*They nod smilingly to each other. He goes. She closes the door behind him. HEDDA, who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain into the inner room. Then she goes to the writing table, takes LOVBORG'S parcel out of the*

bookcase and is on the point of looking through the manuscript.]

[BERTA is heard speaking loudly in the hall. HEDDA turns and listens. Then she quickly locks up the parcel in the drawer and puts the key on the inkstand.]

[EILERT LOVBORG, with his overcoat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and angry.]

LOVBORG. [*Looking towards the hall.*] You will have to let me in, I tell you. [*He closes the door, turns, sees HEDDA, at once regaining his self-control, he bows.*]

HEDDA. [*At writing table.*] Well, Mr. Lovborg, isn't this pretty late to call for Thea?

LOVBORG. You mean it is rather early to call on you. Please excuse me.

HEDDA. How do you know that Thea is still here?

LOVBORG. They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA. [*Going to the oval table.*] Was there anything strange in the servant's manner when she said that?

LOVBORG. [*Looks inquiringly at her.*] Anything strange?

HEDDA. Yes. Did she seem suspicious?

LOVBORG. [*Suddenly understanding.*] Oh, I see what you mean.

Of course I am dragging her down with me! However I didn't notice anything—I suppose Tesman is not up yet?

HEDDA. No—I don't think so—

LOVBORG. When did he come home?

HEDDA. Very late.

LOVBORG. Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA. I gathered that you had had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

LOVBORG. Nothing else?

HEDDA. No, I don't think so. Anyhow, I was so dreadfully sleepy—

[MRS. ELVSTED enters through the curtains from the inner room.]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Going towards him.*] Ah, Eilert! At last—!

LOVBORG. Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looks anxiously at him.*] Why too late?

LOVBORG. Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, no, no. Please don't say that!

LOVBORG. You will say the same when you hear—

MRS. ELVSTED. I won't hear anything!

HEDDA.⁷ Perhaps you would prefer to talk to her alone? If so,
I will leave you.

LOVBORG. No, please stay, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. But I won't listen to anything, I tell you!

LOVBORG. I don't mean to talk about last night's adventures.

MRS. ELVSTED. You don't?

LOVBORG. No—I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED. Part?

HEDDA. [*Involuntarily.*] I knew it!

LOVBORG. You can't be of any more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. How can you stand there and say that? No more service to you! Am I not to help you now as before? Are we not to go on working together?

LOVBORG. Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Despairingly.*] Then what will become of me?

LOVBORG. You must try to live your life as though you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED. But you know that is impossible!

LOVBORG. You must try all the same, Thea. You must go back home.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*In anguish.*] Never in this world. I must be where you are. You have no right to drive me away like this. I will stay here!—I must be with you when the book appears!—

HEDDA. [*Half aloud, in suspense.*] Ah, yes—the book!

LOVBORG. [*Looks at her.*] My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I feel that; and that is why I have a right to be with you when it is published. I want to see with my own eyes how praise and honours are showered upon you—and then—the joy—I must share that with you too.

LOVBORG. Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA. Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED. Never appear!

LOVBORG. *Can never appear.*

MRS. ELVSTED. [*With great anxiety.*] Lovborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA. [*Looks anxiously at him.*] Yes, the manuscript—?

MRS. ELVSTED. Where is it?

LOVBORG. Oh Thea—don't ask me about it!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I must know. I have a right to know.

LOVBORG. The manuscript— Well, then—I have torn it into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Shrieks.*] Oh, no, no—!

HEDDA. [*Involuntarily.*] But that's not—

LOVBORG. [*Looks at her.*] Not true, you think?

HEDDA.^s [*Collecting herself.*] Well, it must be—when you, yourself, say so. But it sounds so impossible—

LOVBORG. It is true all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Wringing her hands.*] Oh, God—Oh God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

LOVBORG. I have torn my own life to pieces—so why shouldn't I tear up my life's work, too?

MRS. ELVSTED. And you did this last night?

LOVBORG. Yes, I did. I tore it into a thousand pieces and scattered them on the fiord—far, far out, where the cool sea water flows. I saw them drift upon it—drift with the current and the wind. Presently they will sink, sink deeper and deeper—just as I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. You know, Lovborg, this that's happened to the book; to me it's as if you had killed a little child.

LOVBORG. Yes, you are right. It is a sort of child murder.

MRS. ELVSTED. How could you do it then? Didn't the child belong to me, too?

HEDDA. [*Almost inaudibly.*] Ah, the child—

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Breathing heavily.*] Then it's all over. I think I shall go now, Hedda.

HEDDA. You are not leaving town?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA. [*Stands waiting for a moment.*] So you are not going to see her home, Mr. Lovborg?

LOVBORG. I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her with me?

HEDDA. Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irreparable?

LOVBORG. It will not end with last night—I know that perfectly well, and the worst of it is that now I have no longer any taste for that sort of life. I have no heart to start it afresh. She has broken my courage and my fighting spirit.

HEDDA. [*Looking straight before her.*] So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him.*] But all the same, how could you be so heartless?

LOVBORG. Oh, don't say I was heartless!

HEDDA. What else could one say when you destroyed what has filled her whole soul for months and years!

LOVBORG. To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA. The truth?

LOVBORG. First of all, you must promise me never to breathe a word of what I am telling you now. Thea must never know.

HEDDA. I give you my word.

LOVBORG. Good. Then you must know that what I said just now is not true.

HEDDA. About the manuscript—?

LOVBORG. Yes, I have neither torn it to pieces nor thrown it into the fiord.

HEDDA. You haven't? Where is it then?

LOVBORG. I have destroyed it, Hedda—utterly destroyed it!

HEDDA. I don't understand?

LOVBORG. Thea called what I have done "child murder."

HEDDA. Yes, so she did.

LOVBORG. But to kill his child is not the worst thing a father can do.

HEDDA. Not the worst?

LOVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Then what is the worst?

LOVBORG. Suppose Hedda, that a man, in the morning, after a night of rioting and debauchery—came home early to his child's mother and said: "Listen, I have been here and there—all over the town. I took our child with me everywhere

—and now the child is lost—utterly lost—the devil only knows where it is and who has got hold of it.”

HEDDA. Well—but when all is said and done, this was only a book.

LOVBORG. Thea's pure soul was in that book!

HEDDA. Yes, so I understand.

LOVBORG. And therefore you can understand too, that for us no future is possible.

HEDDA. What do you mean to do now?

LOVBORG. I will try to make an end of it all. The sooner the better.

HEDDA. [*A step nearer to him.*] But listen, Eilert Lovborg, could you not try to end it beautifully?

LOVBORG. Beautifully? [*Smiling.*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to say in the old days—?

HEDDA. No, no—I don't believe in vine-leaves any more. But try to do it beautifully, please! Now you must go, and don't come here any more. Good-bye!

LOVBORG. Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. Remember me to George Tesman. [*He is on the point of going.*]

HEDDA.⁹ No—wait. I must give you a memento to take with you. [*She goes to the writing table and opens the drawer and the pistol case; then returns to LOVBORG with one of the pistols.*]

LOVBORG. [*Looks at her.*] This? Is this the memento?

HEDDA. [*Nodding slowly.*] Do you recognize it? It was aimed at you once.

LOVBORG. You should have used it then.

HEDDA. You take it—and use it now.

LOVBORG. [*Putting the pistol in his breast pocket.*] Thanks!

HEDDA. But remember, beautifully, Eilert Lovborg—promise me that!

LOVBORG. Good-bye Hedda Gabler. [*He goes out by the hall door.*]

[*HEDDA listens for a moment at the door. Then she returns to the writing table, takes out the manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out and looks at them. Then she goes over and seats herself in the arm-chair beside*

the stove door and then she opens the parcel. She throws some of the sheets of the manuscript into the fire, while whispering to herself.]

HEDDA. Now I am burning your child, Thea—you little curly-haired Thea. [*Throwing more and more sheets into the stove.*] I am burning yours and Eilert Lovborg's child. [*Throws the rest in.*] I am burning it—burning it—

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE: *The same rooms at the Tesmans'. It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The inner room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass doors are pulled together.*

AT RISE: HEDDA, dressed in black, walks up and down in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room. Then disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard striking a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes back to the drawing-room.

BERTA enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp which she places on the table in front of the corner settee. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes very quietly out to the right. HEDDA goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little and looks out into the darkness. Shortly afterwards, MISS TESMAN, in mourning, with hat and veil on, comes in from the hall. HEDDA goes towards her and holds out her hand.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, Hedda, here I am, all dressed in black for my poor sister; she has found peace at last.

HEDDA. As you see, I have heard already. Tesman sent me a note.

MISS TESMAN. He promised me he would. But, all the same, I felt that to you, Hedda—here in the house of life—I ought to bring the sad news myself.

HEDDA. That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. I wish Rina had not left us just now—for this is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

HEDDA. [*Changing the subject.*] It is good to know she died peacefully, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, her end was calm and beautiful. And, thank

heaven, she had the great happiness of seeing George once more—and being able to bid him good-bye.—Has he not come home yet?

HEDDA. No. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you, my dear precious Hedda. I should like nothing better, but I have so much to do. I have to prepare my darling sister for her burial. I want her to look her very sweetest when we carry her to her grave.

HEDDA. Can't I help you in any way?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, no, you must not think of that! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such sad work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time, anyhow.

HEDDA. Oh—one's thoughts—

MISS TESMAN. [*Continuing.*] Well, such is the way of the world! At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of a different kind, thank God!

[GEORGE TESMAN *enters from the hall.*]

HEDDA. There you are at last!

TESMAN. Are you here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN. I am just going, my dear boy. I wonder if you got everything done?

TESMAN. No; I'm afraid I have forgotten half of it. I have to see you again tomorrow. Today my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN. Why, my dear George, you mustn't take it in this way.

TESMAN. No—? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN. Don't let yourself be too downhearted in your sorrow; but try, as I do to be glad that she has found rest at last.

TESMAN. Oh, yes, yes—you are thinking of Rina.

HEDDA. You will be very lonely now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. But that will not last very long, I hope. For poor Rina's room shall not remain empty if I can help it.

TESMAN. Indeed? Who will you put in it?

MISS TESMAN. One can always find some poor invalid who needs to be taken care of.

HEDDA. Would you really take such a burden upon yourself again?

MISS TESMAN. A burden? Heaven forgive you, child, it has been no burden to me.

HEDDA. But to have a total stranger on your hands—

MISS TESMAN. Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folks, and I simply must have someone to live for. Well—heaven be praised, soon there may be something in this house that will keep an old aunt busy.

HEDDA. Please don't worry about things in this house.

TESMAN. Yes. Just fancy, what a wonderful time we three might have together if—

HEDDA. If—?

TESMAN. [*Uneasily.*] Oh, nothing. It will all come right, let us hope so—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Well, well. I dare say you two want to have a little talk. [*Smiling.*] And perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you, George. Good-bye! I must go home to Rina. [*Turning at the door.*] How strange it is to think that now Rina is with me as well as with my poor brother!

TESMAN. Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julia! Eh?

[*MISS TESMAN goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA. [*Coolly scrutinizing* TESMAN.] I almost think that Aunt Rina's death affects you more than it does Aunt Julia.

TESMAN. Oh, it's not that alone. But I am so terribly upset about Eilert.

HEDDA.¹ [*Quickly.*] Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN. I called on him this afternoon, intending to tell him the manuscript was safe.

HEDDA. Well, did you find him?

TESMAN. No, he wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA. Yes, directly after you had gone.

TESMAN. And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces, eh?

HEDDA. Yes that is what he said.

TESMAN. Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out

of his mind, Hedda. I suppose in that case you thought it best not to give it back to him.

HEDDA. No, he didn't get it.

TESMAN. But of course you told him that we had it?

HEDDA. No. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN. No, I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if in desperation, he should do himself some injury. Please let me have the manuscript. I will take it to him at once. Where is it, Hedda?

HEDDA. [*Cold and immovable, leaning on the arm-chair.*] I haven't got it any longer.

TESMAN. Haven't got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA. I burnt it—burnt every word of it.

TESMAN. [*Terror-stricken.*] Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!!!

HEDDA. Don't shout so loud. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN. Burnt! Why good God—! No, no, no! It's impossible!

HEDDA. All the same, it is a fact.

TESMAN. Do you realize what you have done, Hedda? It is unlawful appropriation of lost property. Fancy that! Just ask Judge Brack, he will tell you what that means.

HEDDA. I think it is wiser not to speak of it—either to Judge Brack or to anyone else.

TESMAN. But how could you do anything so unheard of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Do answer me—

HEDDA.² [*Suppressing an almost imperceptible smile.*] I did it for your sake, George!

TESMAN. For my sake?

HEDDA. This morning when you told me that he had read it to you—

TESMAN. Yes, yes—what then?

HEDDA. Then you admitted that you were jealous of his work.

TESMAN. Oh, of course, I didn't mean that literally.

HEDDA. How should I know—in any case, I could not bear the idea that anyone should put you in the shade.

TESMAN. [*Half doubting, half joyful.*] Hedda! Is this true? But—but—I have never known you to show your love like that before. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well, I may as well tell you that—just now—at this

time—[*Impatiently breaking off.*] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you all about it.

TESMAN. Oh, I almost think I understand, Hedda. [*Clasps his hands.*] Great heavens! Do you really mean it, eh?

HEDDA. Don't shout so loud, I tell you. The servant might hear.

TESMAN. [*Laughing joyfully.*] The servant—? Why how absurd you are, Hedda! It is only my dear old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

HEDDA.³ [*Clinching her hands in desperation—absolutely genuine.*] Oh, God! it is killing me,—it is killing me, all this!

TESMAN. What is killing you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. [*Controlling herself.*] All this—absurdity—George.

TESMAN. Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news. But, after all, perhaps I had better not tell Berta.

HEDDA. Oh, well—why not that—with all the rest?

TESMAN. No, I won't tell Berta. But I will certainly tell Aunt Julia. Oh, she will be so happy—so happy!

HEDDA. When she hears that I burnt Eilert Lovborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN. No, of course not—nobody must know about the manuscript. But I will certainly tell Aunt Julia how dearly you love me, Hedda. She ought to share that joy with me. I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

HEDDA. Why not ask Aunt Julia about that, too?

TESMAN. I will, indeed, sometime or other. [*Looks uneasy again.*] But the manuscript. Good God!—the manuscript! It is too terrible to think what poor Eilert will do now.

[*MRS. ELVSTED, dressed as in the first act, with hat and cloak, enters from the hall.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Greets them hurriedly, and says very agitatedly.*] Please, Hedda dear, forgive my coming back so soon.

HEDDA. What has happened, Thea?

TESMAN. Is it anything about Eilert Lovborg, eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes; I am terribly afraid he has met with some accident.

HEDDA. [*Seizes her arm.*] Do you think so?

TESMAN. Why—what makes you think that Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. I heard them talking of him at my boarding house—just as I came in. The most incredible things are said about him.

TESMAN. Yes, I heard that too! And yet I can prove that he went straight home last night. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well, what did they say at the boarding house?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I couldn't make it out at all. Either they knew nothing definite or—well, they stopped talking when they saw me; and I didn't dare ask.

TESMAN. [*Walking about uneasily.*] Dear me! Dear me! Let us hope you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no. I am sure it was of him they were talking—and I heard something about a hospital or—

TESMAN. Hospital?

HEDDA. No. Surely not that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I am so terrified! I even went to his lodgings to ask for him!

HEDDA. You did that, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. What else could I do? I simply couldn't stand the suspense any longer.

TESMAN. But you didn't find him—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And they knew nothing about him. They said he hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon.

TESMAN. Yesterday! Fancy—how could they say that?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I am sure something terrible must have happened to him.

TESMAN. Hedda dear—don't you think I'd better go and make some inquiries?

HEDDA. No. Please don't mix yourself up in this affair.

[JUDGE BRACK, *with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which BERTA opens and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows silently.*]

TESMAN. Is that you dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK. Yes, it was imperative that I should see you at once.

TESMAN. I can see you have heard the news about Aunt Rina?

BRACK. Yes, that among other things.

TESMAN. Isn't it sad? Eh?

BRACK. Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

TESMAN. [*Looks doubtfully at him.*] Has anything else happened?

BRACK. Yes.

HEDDA. [*In suspense.*] Anything sad, Judge?

BRACK. That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Unable to remain silent any longer.*] Oh, I'm sure it is something about Eilert Lovborg!

BRACK. [*Looks quickly at her.*] What makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted? Perhaps you have already heard something?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Confused.*] No, nothing at all—but—

TESMAN. Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Well, I am sorry to say Eilert Lovborg has been taken to the hospital—they say he is dying.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Shrieks.*] Oh God! Oh, God!

TESMAN. To the hospital! And dying—

HEDDA.⁴ [*Involuntarily.*] So soon then—

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Moaning.*] And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA. [*Whispering.*] Thea—Thea—be careful!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Unheedingly.*] I must go to him! I must see him alive!

BRACK. I'm afraid it is quite useless, Mrs. Elvsted. No one is allowed to see him.

MRS. ELVSTED. But tell me at least what has happened to him? What is it?

TESMAN. You don't mean to say that he has, himself—eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I am sure he has.

TESMAN. Hedda, how can you—?

BRACK. [*Scrutinizing her.*] Unfortunately, you guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN. He has himself—fancy that!

HEDDA. Shot himself!

BRACK. Right again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Trying to control her emotions.*] When did it happen, Judge Brack?

BRACK. This afternoon—between three and four.

TESMAN. But, good Lord, where did he do it? Eh?

BRACK. [*With some hesitation.*] Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, that is impossible—for I was there between six and seven.

BRACK. Well then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found—and that he had shot himself through the heart.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

HEDDA. [*To BRACK.*] Through the heart?

BRACK. Yes—as I told you.

HEDDA. Not in the temple?

BRACK. Through the heart, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Well, well—the heart is a good place too.

BRACK. What do you mean, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. [*Evasively.*] Oh, nothing—nothing.

TESMAN. And the wound is dangerous, you say? Eh?

BRACK. Absolutely mortal! Most likely it is already over.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I feel it. It is over—all over—oh Hedda!

TESMAN. But tell me. How did you hear all this?

BRACK. [*Curtly.*] Through one of the police—a man I had some business dealings with.

HEDDA. [*Brightly.*] At last, a deed worth doing!

TESMAN. [*Terrified.*] Good heavens, Hedda, what are you saying?

HEDDA. I say, there is beauty in this.

BRACK. H'm, Mrs. Tesman—

TESMAN. Beauty! Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such a case?

HEDDA. Eilert Lovborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

MRS. ELVSTED. No; don't think for a moment it happened like that! I am sure he did it in delirium.

TESMAN. In despair.

HEDDA. No. No he did not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK. [*Starting.*] The manuscript? Has he torn that up?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Last night.

TESMAN. [*Whispering.*] Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

BRACK. H'm—how very extraordinary.

TESMAN. [*Moving about the room.*] How terrible—to think of Eilert's dying in this way! Without leaving behind him the book that would have made his name famous.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only it could be rewritten.

TESMAN. Yes, if it only could. I don't know what I wouldn't give—

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN. What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Searching in the pocket of her dress.*] Look here! I have kept all the notes he used to dictate from.

HEDDA.⁵ [*Stepping nearer.*] Ah—!

TESMAN. You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. I put them in my bag when I left home and I still have them with me.

TESMAN. Do let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Gives him a bundle of papers.*] But they are all so terribly mixed up.

TESMAN. Oh, how wonderful! Fancy if we could put the whole thing together again.

MRS. ELVSTED. At least let us try.

TESMAN. Yes, let us try. We must manage it! I will give my life to it.

HEDDA. You, George? Your life?

TESMAN. Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait. You understand, Hedda, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA. Perhaps.

TESMAN. And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, let us give all our energy to this task. It is no good brooding over what has happened. Eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and—

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN. Well then, let us start at once. I can't rest until we

have looked through these notes. Where shall we sit? Here?
No, in there, in the inner room. Excuse me, my dear Judge.
Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. How wonderful it would be if we could do it.

[TESMAN and MRS. ELVSTED go into the inner room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon eagerly examining the papers.]

[HEDDA crosses to the stove and sits in the arm-chair. Presently BRACK goes up to her.]

HEDDA. [*In a low voice. Here again there is a sense of exultation.*] Oh, what a sense of freedom there is in this act of Eilert Lovborg's.

BRACK. Freedom, Mrs. Tesman? Well, of course, it is freedom for him.

HEDDA. No, I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

BRACK. [*Smiling.*] H'm—my dear Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of specialist, too, like—well, you know.

BRACK. [*Looking hard at her.*] I have a feeling that Eilert Lovborg was more to you than perhaps you were willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

HEDDA. I don't answer such questions. I only know that Eilert Lovborg has had the courage to live his life according to his own fancy and then—this last act so great and so beautiful! And to think that he should have the strength and the will to turn away from the banquet of life while still so young.

BRACK. I am sorry, Mrs. Tesman, but I fear I will have to destroy a charming illusion.

HEDDA. Illusion?

BRACK. It would soon be destroyed, in any case.

HEDDA. What do you mean?

BRACK. Eilert Lovborg did not shoot himself—voluntarily.

HEDDA. Not voluntarily?

BRACK. No; the thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

HEDDA. [*In suspense.*] Have you concealed something? What is it?

BRACK. For the sake of poor Mrs. Elvsted, I slightly changed the facts.

HEDDA. What are the facts, then?

BRACK. First, that he is already dead.

HEDDA. At the hospital.

BRACK. Yes—without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA. What more have you concealed?

BRACK. That—the tragedy did not happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA. Oh, that makes no difference.

BRACK. I rather think it does. For I must tell you—Eilert Lovborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA.⁶ [*Tries to rise, but sinks back again.*] That is impossible Judge. He cannot have been there again today.

BRACK. He was there this afternoon. Said he wanted them to return something they had taken from him. He talked wildly about a lost child—

HEDDA. Ah—so that was why—

BRACK. I thought he meant the manuscript. But now I hear he destroyed that himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocket-book.

HEDDA. Yes—probably. And there—there he was found?

BRACK. Yes. With a discharged pistol in his breast pocket. He had wounded himself mortally.

HEDDA. He was shot through the heart!

BRACK. No—in the bowels.

HEDDA. How horrible! Why is it that everything I touch becomes low and despicable.

BRACK. There is something else, Mrs. Tesman—something—let us call it very mysterious—about the entire affair.

HEDDA. And what is that?

BRACK. The pistol he carried—

HEDDA. [*Breathless.*] Well? What of it?

BRACK. He must have stolen it.

HEDDA. [*Leaps up.*] Stolen it! That is not true! He didn't steal it!

BRACK. No other explanation is possible. He must have stolen it— Hush!

[TESMAN and MRS. ELVSTED have risen from the table in the inner room and come into the drawing-room.]

TESMAN. [*With his hands full of papers.*] Hedda, dear, it is almost impossible to see under that lamp. Just think!

HEDDA. Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN. Would you mind if we stayed here and used your desk, eh?

HEDDA. No, not at all. [*Quickly.*] But let me clear it first.

TESMAN. Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There's plenty of room.

HEDDA. No, please let me do as I say. I will put all these things on the piano.

[*She has drawn out an object, covered with sheets of music and carries it all into the inner room to the left. TESMAN lays his scraps of paper on the writing table and moves the lamp there from the corner table. He and MRS. ELVSTED sit down and proceed with their work. HEDDA returns.*]

HEDDA. [*Behind MRS. ELVSTED'S chair, gently ruffling her hair.*] Well, Thea dear—how are you getting on with Eilert Lovborg's memorial?

MRS. ELVSTED. [*Looking at her in a discouraged way.*] Oh, it will be a terribly hard job.

TESMAN. We must manage it. I am determined to do it. And you know it is the work I do best, arranging other people's papers.

[*HEDDA goes over to the stove and sits down on one of the foot-stools. BRACK stands over her, leaning on the arm-chair.*]

HEDDA. [*Whispers.*] What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK.⁷ [*Likewise.*] That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA. Why stolen it?

BRACK. Because all other explanations ought to be out of the question, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Indeed?

BRACK. [*Glancing at her.*] Of course, Eilert Lovborg was here this morning. Was he not?

HEDDA. Yes.

BRACK. Were you alone with him?

HEDDA. Yes, for a little while.

BRACK. Did you leave the room while he was here?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Try to remember. Are you sure you didn't leave the room for a moment?

HEDDA. Well, perhaps I went into the hall for a moment—

BRACK. And where was your pistol case?

HEDDA. It was in—

BRACK. Well, Mrs. Tesman—

HEDDA. The case stood there on the writing table.

BRACK. Have you looked since to see if both pistols are there?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Well, you needn't. I saw the pistol which was found in Lovborg's pocket, and I recognized it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before that too.

HEDDA. Have you got it with you?

BRACK. No, the police have it.

HEDDA. What will the police do with it?

BRACK. Search until they find the owner.

HEDDA. Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK.⁸ [*Bends over her and whispers.*] No, Hedda Gabler, not as long as I keep silent.

HEDDA. [*Looks at him frightened.*] And if you do not keep silent—what then?

BRACK. [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA. [*Firmly.*] Death rather than that!

BRACK. [*Smiling.*] People say such things—but they don't do them.

HEDDA. [*Without replying.*] And supposing the pistol was not stolen and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK. Well, Hedda—then we have the scandal.

HEDDA. The scandal!

BRACK. Yes, the scandal of which you are so terrified. Of course you will be brought into court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accident or murder. Did he threaten to shoot her, and did the pistol go off then—or did she grab the pistol, shoot him, afterwards putting it back into his pocket? She might have done that, for she is an able-bodied woman this—Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA. But what have I to do with all this repulsive business?

BRACK. Nothing. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lovborg the pistol? And what conclusion will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA. [*Bowing her head.*] That is true. I never thought of that.

BRACK. Well, fortunately, there is no danger as long as I keep silent.

HEDDA. [*Looks up at him.*] Then I am in your power, Judge! You have me at your beck and call from now on.

BRACK. [*Whispers softly.*] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA. But, nevertheless, I am in your power. Bound down by your will. A slave—your slave! [*Rises impetuously.*] No, I can't endure—I can't endure the thought of it. I never will—

BRACK. [*Looks half mockingly at her.*] As a rule, people get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA.⁹ [*Returns his look.*] Perhaps. [*She crosses to the writing table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates TESMAN's intonations.*] Well? Are you getting ahead, George, eh?

TESMAN. Heaven knows dear. In any case, it will take months to do.

HEDDA. [*As before.*] Fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through MRS. ELVSTED's hair.*] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea, to work here with Tesman—as you used to work with Eilert Lovborg?

MRS. ELVSTED. How I wish I could inspire your husband in the same way!

HEDDA. Oh, that will come—in time, I am sure—

TESMAN. Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really am beginning to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and talk to Judge Brack again?

HEDDA.¹⁰ Is there nothing at all I can do to help?

TESMAN. No, thank you. Not a thing. [*To BRACK.*] Hereafter, I hope you will keep Hedda company, my dear Judge.

BRACK. [*With a glance at HEDDA.*] Certainly, I shall be delighted.

HEDDA. Thanks. But tonight I am tired. I will go and lie down a little while on the sofa.

TESMAN. Yes, dear—do that.

[*HEDDA goes into the inner room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano. MRS. ELVSTED starts from her chair.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh—what's that?

TESMAN. [*Runs to the doorway.*] My dearest Hedda, please don't play dance music tonight! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of poor Eilert!

HEDDA. [*Puts her head out between the curtains.*] And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them. [*Laugh.*] Never mind—After this, I promise to be quiet. [*Very quickly, almost inaudibly. Closes the curtains again.*]

TESMAN. [*At the writing table.*] I don't think it is good for her to see us at this distressing work; but I have an idea, Mrs. Elvsted. You shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's and then I will come over in the evenings and we can work there. Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, that will perhaps be the best thing to do.

HEDDA. [*From the inner room.*] I can hear what you are saying, George. But what am I going to do these long evenings all by myself?

TESMAN. [*Turning over the papers.*] Oh, I am sure Judge Brack will be kind enough to come and see you.

BRACK. [*In the arm-chair, calls out gaily:*] Every blessed evening, with the very greatest pleasure, Mrs. Tesman! I am sure we shall get on capitally together, we two.

HEDDA.¹¹ [*Speaking loud and clear.*] Yes, that's what you hope, Judge—especially now that you are cock-of-the-walk.—[*A shot is heard within. TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED and BRACK jump up.*]

TESMAN. Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again. [*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA lies stretched out on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries. BERTA enters in alarm from the right.*]

TESMAN. [*Speaks almost in whisper, intense; throws away last "fancy that."*] Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK. [*Half fainting, sinks into the arm-chair.*] Good God!—people don't do such things.

NOTES ON HEDDA GABLER

BY EVA LE GALLIENNE

These notes are not meant necessarily to be used word for word. To anyone of real creative imagination they may prove annoying—then let them disregard them—but there are few such people. To those of little experience they may prove of value as a basis for argument if nothing else. To some, who after mature thought have come to much the same conclusions, they may provide a convenient crystallization. To others, who want to be guided, they may prove a practical key to a production of the play.

In any case I offer them for what they are worth—a few thoughts, a few technical suggestions. After all the only *real* ingredient necessary for work in the theatre or in any art is *talent*. If you haven't that, all the notes in the world cannot help you; if you *have* it, all the notes in the world cannot hinder you. So, at least, no harm is done!

"Hedda Gabler" seems to have a very definite feeling of accelerated tempo from the beginning, which is quite slow and lazy, to a gradually intensifying speed and crescendo—much like a whirlpool. The first act is the longest; the second a little shorter; the third shorter still; and the last shortest and swiftest of all.

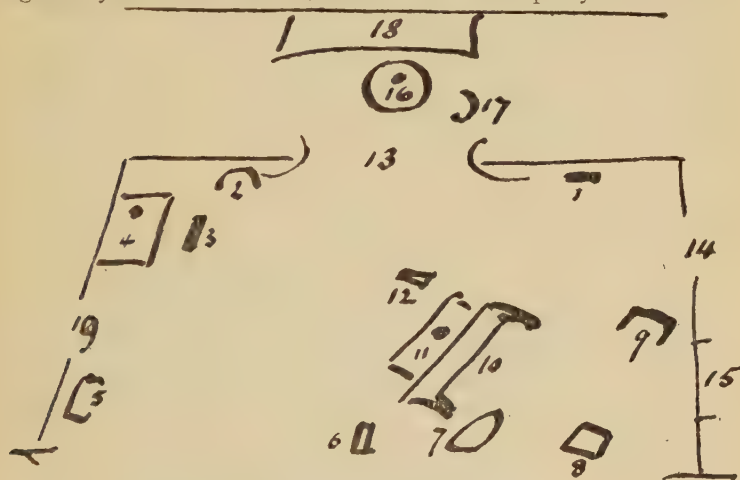
As the play progresses, it is more and more eliminated of words, until it gains a bare intensity that is almost breathtaking. There is a sense of fatality about it—much as one feels in the Greek tragedies. It rushes to an inevitable, tragic finale, impossible to prevent. There have been many interpretations of "Hedda Gabler." These few notes are simply a key to one of the many.

I have always felt that Hedda was more tragic than evil; her mania for destruction seems to spring more from a pathological condition beyond her control, than from any conscious

desire on her part. She seems to be whirled inevitably to her end—as a leaf before the wind. I think of Verlaine's lines:

*"Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
Deçà, de là,
Pareil à la
Feuille morte."*

The following setting at the Civic Repertory Theatre, designed by Aline Bernstein, consisted of a taupe cyclorama with



Key to above plan:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 small chair | 11 consol table |
| 2 arm-chair | 12 small chair |
| 3 small chair | 13 opening to back room |
| 4 writing desk | 14 entrance from hall |
| 5 arm-chair | 15 fireplace |
| 6 small chair | 16 table |
| 7 very low table | 17 chair |
| 8 tabouret | 18 couch |
| 9 arm-chair | 19 French window |
| 10 sofa | Lamps on tables 16-4-11 |

openings for French window and fireplace. The entrance L. U. E. had no door; the cyclorama was draped to make the entrance; and the center opening into the back room was a draped opening, on a drawstring, released when Hedda closes the curtains in the last act. Behind this center opening was a flat backing of the same taupe velvet. The principal value of such a setting is that it is simple and can be used for many different plays, the character of the set being entirely altered by furniture and the different openings in the cyclorama. It is an economical and effective investment for any Little Theatre. It furnished an unusually interesting background but is sometimes more difficult to speak in than a closed set.

The furniture used at the Civic Repertory Theatre was mostly old Italian. The plain taupe background throws out details of furniture clearly, and the most beautiful pieces available should be used.

ACT I

1. This scene is very difficult to make casual. It is, of course, exposition and must be human and simple in the playing. Aunt Julia is really a very nice old lady, gentle and kind and, above all, simple. (No cooing.) It is only Hedda who finds her exasperating, because she is not particularly amusing.
2. George Tesman. George Tesman is a dangerous part. He must not be a clown. It must be possible for Hedda to have married him, and she would never have married a "buffoon." He is childishy naïve—a real *bon enfant*—a bore, of course, but not without charm, springing mostly from intense vitality and good humor. Tesman always hovers about; he never makes a clean-cut or decided movement, but muddles.
3. This scene, also largely exposition, should not be dragged. Of course, neither Aunt Julia nor Tesman can speak in very quick tempo, but the cues should be picked up smartly. In playing Aunt Julia, one should be careful not to be too sentimental. Tesman's "fancy that" should be handled care-

fully, never pointed for comedy. This would be dangerous in the last act. It is with him a habit of speech; he doesn't even know he is saying it.

4. Very fast tempo of speech throughout for Hedda. A hard, well-bred voice—a voice that glitters like frost—a conscious voice.
5. Tesman speaks slowly. He is troubled, constrained, but gentle and humble. His next speech should be jovial. He would do anything to please Hedda.
6. Hedda uses her society voice when first meeting Mrs. Elvsted. It is charming on the surface but means nothing that it says.
7. Thea is by no means a fool. She is totally unworldly and therefore an easy prey for Hedda; but if they were to have a conversation on learned matters, Hedda would find herself at a loss. Thea is unsuspecting and quite guileless—a quiet, studious person, unused to society. With her first mention of Lovborg, Hedda watches her carefully from “behind her eyes”—like a cat. Tesman's slow mentality when they talk of Lovborg irritates her more than anything.
8. Hedda must be very charming to Thea. There is no outward sign of anything, but nevertheless one should feel strongly the “*arrière pensée*” and the eyes might give her away now and then to anyone more worldly than Thea.
9. Thea pauses before saying, “I shall never go back to him again.” Hedda is amazed at her courage and also resentful of it. She is too conventional and has never felt anything deeply enough to dare anything. “God, yes! Courage—if one only had that!” Hedda sits on an arm of the sofa upstage and puts her arm around Thea's shoulders. Her hand should give the impression of a cat's paw, claws barely concealed—but she is charming.
10. High tension in Hedda's voice when she has learned of Thea's and Lovborg's companionship from Thea, but her feelings should not be obvious. When Thea talks of the “other woman,” the audience must be fully aware (not knowing how they became aware) that Hedda is the other woman.
11. Judge Brack. One should feel in some intangible way the

sinister quality of Brack and his desire for Hedda; but be careful not to make him a villain—this would not be difficult. This play should never be obviously acted—always by suggestion. Brack should have “taste.” He and Hedda are the two people in the play who have the cerebral way of speaking. He is a lawyer and should show it in his manner of conversing—dry, clipped. Brack doesn’t quite know how to approach the subject of the competition and all his remarks about Lovborg lead up in a gradual crescendo to the disturbing information he has for Tesman. Hedda watches Tesman during this scene, much amused. She laughs. A mental picture of the two of them and the irony of the situation as related to her, intrigues her. Tesman, on the other hand, is frightfully upset. He is not a fighter and it all had looked so safe and easy.

12. Curtain descends during last words.

ACT II

1. This scene should be played very lightly. Both Hedda and Brack have a sense of humor and they understand each other.
2. Although Hedda thinks Tesman faintly ridiculous, she can’t bear the thought of other people thinking so, or at least having such an opinion about *her* husband.
3. At Lovborg’s entrance, Hedda stiffens against the desk and looks intently at him. Then, in her best society manner, she goes to greet him. She watches, rather than enters into this scene, quite apart from the three men. Lovborg must be in every way in absolute contrast to Tesman. He treats him with a kindly sort of contempt. Hedda is amused later on by Lovborg’s very decided refusal to drink. . . . Lovborg knows Tesman is afraid of him as a competitor. His contempt is shown markedly in this scene. Tesman on the contrary is relieved and beaming.
4. Lovborg doesn’t mean to be unkind to Thea, whom he really loves and to whom he is really grateful, but she must sometimes bore him. Hedda stimulates him. He knows she

is dangerous but he has never cared particularly for safety. He has never forgotten Hedda and now comes under her spell again.

5. Hedda goes to meet Thea and brings her into the room, her arm around her shoulders. Thea is about to seat herself in the center of the sofa. Hedda takes her hand and forces her into the corner. She then seats herself in the center with Lovborg on the other side. . . . Lovborg wants to hurt Hedda. It makes him feel strong when he knows he is weak.
6. This scene played very fast, very lightly, leading up in a steady crescendo to Hedda's lines "We can all three enjoy ourselves." The dialogue should dovetail.
7. For a while Hedda is perhaps too revealing to Thea, but when she sees that Thea is really alarmed, she changes her tone to one light and charming.

Act III

1. The audience must feel here that Hedda is discovering on her face signs of age which so annoy her she strikes the mirror before throwing it down.
2. Hedda has no definite intentions here of burning the manuscript. It has a fascination for her which she cannot resist, but there is no actual decision.
3. Hedda is eaten up with jealousy when Brack makes reference to the red-haired singer. She rises and goes to fireplace, irritated. The scene immediately following should be played at tremendous speed, cues picked up instantly, in some cases dovetailing. Hedda's mind is so quick that she anticipates what the other person is going to say, which makes her seem more impatient than she really is. She has a very quick mind. That is why Tesman drives her crazy. The scene must be played with the utmost realism.
4. Hedda's splendid vision of Lovborg with "vine-leaves in his hair" is broken. She almost cries in her bitterness. This is the first indication of what her extreme horror will be at the way Lovborg kills himself.
5. I think Hedda is frightened here; but in my estimation,

contrary to Ibsen's directions, she never gives herself away and so, after accepting this situation, she turns to Brack with a brilliant smile.

6. This whole scene is played with an edge to her voice. It is a fencing match where both are masked, neither of them coming into the open. . . . The minute Brack is out her manner changes and her smile disappears. She pauses and looks after him. I feel that she stands there weighing the situation. Finally with a contemptuous shrug, because she doesn't think he will ever have her in his power, she goes up to the back room to see no one is there, before getting the manuscript. She takes it from the bookcase putting it quickly into the drawer of the desk when she hears voices in the hall.
7. Hedda, of course, has no intention of going. It is just a gesture. Lovborg in this scene should be almost hysterical. Hedda is quite stirred over Thea and Lovborg. Although she says nothing, her presence must be felt almost more than in any part of the play. Hedda here always gives me the impression of a cat sitting absolutely immobile, except for a slightly rhythmical movement of the paws, in and out, withdrawn, quite still, intensely concentrated, vitally alive and watching.
8. I always feel that here Hedda is rising to great feelings of power. She knows these people are suffering and she knows that she could stop that suffering at any instant, if she wanted to. In other words, for the moment she has achieved her wish for "power to mold a human destiny" and it gives her a sense almost of ecstasy. I always feel as though I had grown in inches. At the first mention of child—as regards Lovborg's manuscript—Hedda at once feels her own child, the child that she dreads—Tesman's child. Hedda has almost a personal feeling about the manuscript, growing intensely from the time it was first mentioned as Thea's and Lovborg's child. Though she seethes inside, outwardly she must be controlled.
9. This is a moment of intimate communion between them—a kind of pact. Hedda hasn't the courage to take this man whom she loves, as far as she can love anyone, but the idea of anyone else having him is unbearable to her. She would rather know him dead. I think the rhythm of the two names as Ibsen has

used them here is immensely expressive of the mood of the scene.

HEDDA. But beautifully, Eilert Lovborg, promise me that.

LOVBORG. Good-bye, Hedda Gabler.

After he goes Hedda stands quite still as though in a daze and then sinks into a chair—long pause. I think the following scene up to the end of the act should be held almost indefinitely.

As Hedda sits there, the thought of the child keeps knocking on her brain, and then the realization that “the child” is there, in her possession, in her power, becomes immensely fascinating to her. She is drawn in spite of herself towards the manuscript, as though mesmerized.* She circles nearer, not touching it quite—then away again—until her will is broken down by the passion of her desire to destroy—she seizes the M.S. and once having it in her hands she tears it into a thousand pieces and with a fanatic, almost brooding joy, burns it.

ACT IV

1. Again the swift picking up of cues. Hedda’s extreme irritation at Tesman’s slowness reaches a climax here. When Hedda informs Tesman that she has burned the manuscript, she must not do so melodramatically, rather in a matter of fact, cold way.
2. I always believe that Hedda tries this subterfuge on him and can scarcely believe that anyone could be so naïve as to take it seriously.
3. “Oh, God! It is killing me.” She has visions of all she has to put up with from Aunt Julia, from Berta, from Tesman himself.
4. When Hedda hears that Lovborg has killed himself she has a sense of fulfillment, a quiet sort of triumph. When later she is learning what really happened (that scene must be played simply and quietly, if it is pointed at all, or played over dramatically, it is apt to get a laugh.) the horror of Lovborg’s death nearly kills her.

* There are naturally hundreds of ways of playing this scene—this is only a suggestion for one way.

5. Hedda thought of everything as closed. The thing suddenly reopens with the possibility of Thea's and Tesman's working out the manuscript. The thing that frightens Hedda is the fact that the book once published will always be there—always a reminder.
6. To Hedda it seems a sacrilege that Lovborg should have been able to leave her after their intimate communion and go straight to this vulgar person. At Brack's speech, "No, in the bowels," she covers her face with her hands. After a long pause she looks up, tortured, and cries out in agony. After this, the circumstances of the pistol barely interest her; she is cold, apathetic.
7. Brack, a lawyer, should make his presence felt. This scene should be a cross-examination, low, hard tones. It should be played quietly but with nervous intensity.
8. This is the first time Brack has called her Hedda Gabler, which is significant. As he has always been in love with her this sudden power would give him opportunity to be excessively annoying. When Brack describes possibilities of scandal, Hedda thinks of her background, of what her life should have been, what she wanted it to be, and her own extreme failure. She feels lost, almost like a child in a dark wood.
9. This is where she decides to kill herself. At the word "perhaps" her tone must immediately change, in the next speech, to a dressed-up cultivated voice.
10. I think Hedda here gets a certain devastating feeling of loneliness and uselessness. She has lived only for herself and now finds herself completely isolated. This line is spoken almost timidly and humbly. For once she would like to be taken in.
11. Loud and clear. Very high. She has the pistol in her hand and is going to pull the trigger; not an easy thing to do. With all this, her words should carry an undertone of hysteria.

CARLO GOLDONI

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Performances of plays at his grandfather's country house early implanted in Goldoni a love for the theatre; and, if his Memoirs are to be credited, a comedy written in his eighth year evinces the earnest and ardent extent of this interest.

He was born in 1707 and received his early education with the Jesuits in Perugia, after which he studied philosophy, medicine and law in turn. But in all these attempts his interest in the theatre interfered—a few months in the study of philosophy and he joined a strolling company of actors, a few months desultory study of medicine and he found the theatre and its actors absorbing his attention, a few months of law in Pavia and he was obliged to leave the city because of a satire he had written.

In 1736 he married Nicoletta Conia who, be it said to her eternal credit, contributed substantially to his mind's well-being by looking with wise eyes at his subsequent marital infidelities. Goldoni's vicissitudes in the period following are chronicled cheerfully in his Memoirs. Though obviously his route lay toward the stage, it was not until 1747—after having tried verse, tragedy, opera, and concluding successfully with character comedy—that he received a substantial engagement with the Medebac company where he did most, and the best, of his work.

In 1761 he went to France, never returning to Italy, to act as playwright for the Italian company in Paris. He continued his association with the French court, after this engagement, as royal tutor; and, at the marriage festivities of Marie Antoinette and the Dauphin, wrote his last play—*The Kind-Hearted Bear*. At the age of 75 he began his Memoirs, writing on them for five years. Though he died in poverty (1793), he had received his pension of 3,600 francs regularly until the previous year when the revolution swept it away.

Goldoni's fertility was amazing; he wrote over one hundred and fifty pieces. In 1752 when Madam Medebac, the leading lady of the Medebac company, was ill, he wrote *La Locandiera* for the soubrette Carolina. It was as brilliantly successful as Madam Medebac was bitterly jealous. She arose from her bed and demanded that the performance be discontinued. *La Locandiera* is characteristic Goldoni—direct, simple, sprightly; with its characters so rigidly cast they seem little more than facilely handled puppets; with humor inherent in the situation rather than the verbal expression of that situation; all so potently artificial that its very artifice is entertaining.

Playwriting, however, was not Goldoni's only contribution to the theatre. His battle against the formal *Commedia dell' arte*, the typical characters of which had worn their way into the hearts of the Italians, was successful if difficult; and therein lies, in a large measure, his claim to immortality.

LA LOCANDIERA

by Carlo Goldoni

Translated and adapted

by

Helen Lohmann

LA LOCANDIERA

THE MARQUIS OF FORLIPOPOLI	<i>Sayre Crawley</i>
THE COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA	<i>Paul Leyssac</i>
FABRIZIO, a Servant at the Inn	<i>Robert F. Ross</i>
THE CAVALIER OF RIPAFRATTA	<i>Egon Brecher</i>
MIRANDOLINA, the Mistress of the Inn	<i>Eva Le Gallienne</i>
SERVANT TO THE CAVALIER	<i>J. Edward Bromberg</i>
ORTENSIA } Actresses	{ <i>Josephine Hutchinson</i>
DEJANIRA }	{ <i>Beatrice De Neergaard</i>



Photo by White Studio

Scene from Act III, La Locandiera

ACT ONE

SCENE I

Room in the Inn. The MARQUIS OF FORLIPOPOLI pacing back and forth and the COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA seated L. of table.

MARQUIS.¹ [*Crosses R.*] There is a difference between you and me.

COUNT. My money is as good as yours in an Inn.

MARQUIS. The mistress gives me my due. She makes a distinction between us.

COUNT. Why?

MARQUIS. I am the Marquis of Forlipopoli.

COUNT. I am the Count of Albafiorita.

MARQUIS. You bought your title.

COUNT. You sold your estates.

MARQUIS. Enough. I am who I am. I demand respect.

COUNT. Who is lacking in respect toward you? It is you who speak too freely. . . .

MARQUIS. [*Crosses R.*] I am in this inn because I love its mistress. Everyone knows it. I demand that everyone treat with respect a young woman who pleases me.

COUNT. That is good. Why do you think I am in Florence? Why do you think I am in this inn? Do you think you can prevent my loving Mirandolina?

MARQUIS. You'll accomplish nothing.

COUNT. I will not. You will?

MARQUIS. I will. You will not. I am who I am. Mirandolina needs my protection.

COUNT. Mirandolina needs money, not protection.

MARQUIS.² Money? That is not lacking.

COUNT. I spend a gold piece a day, and I am not stingy with my gifts.

MARQUIS. I do not say what I spend.

COUNT. You do not need to say. Everyone knows.

MARQUIS. Not everything.

COUNT. Yes, dear Marquis. Everything. Servants talk.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses L. COUNT.*] Speaking of servants, I do not like that man Fabrizio, and I think Mirandolina shows him too much favor.

COUNT. It would not be a bad thing if she married him. It's six months since her father died. She's young . . . alone . . . mistress of an inn . . . she won't find it easy to keep out of trouble. I've promised her sixty sequins when she marries.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses R.*] If she marries . . . I . . . I know what I will do.

COUNT. Come, as good friends, let's agree. We'll each give her sixty sequins—

MARQUIS. What I give will be my own affair. I will not boast of it. I am who I am. [*Calling.*] Who's out there? [*Crosses L. goes U. C.*]

COUNT. [*Aside.*] Ruined . . . but still superb.
[*Enter FABRIZIO C.*]

FABRIZIO. [*Comes down between them. To the MARQUIS.*] You called, sir?

MARQUIS. Sir! Who taught you manners?

FABRIZIO.³ Your pardon.

COUNT. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Tell me. How is the little mistress?

FABRIZIO. She is well, Illustrious.

MARQUIS. Is she up yet?

FABRIZIO. Yes, Illustrious.

MARQUIS. Ass!

FABRIZIO. Why, Illustrious?

MARQUIS. What is this Illustrious?

FABRIZIO. It is the title I give the other gentleman.

MARQUIS. There is a difference between him and me.

COUNT. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Do you hear that?

FABRIZIO. [*Softly to the COUNT.*] Indeed, there is a difference . . . in the bills.

MARQUIS. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Tell your mistress I wish to speak with her.

FABRIZIO. Yes, Excellency. Am I right this time?

MARQUIS. Quite right, as you have known these three months.

You are exceedingly rude.

FABRIZIO. As your Excellency pleases.

COUNT. Would you like to see the difference between the Marquis and me?

MARQUIS. What did you say?

COUNT. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Here's a gold piece for you. Make him give you another.

FABRIZIO. [*To the COUNT.*] Thanks, Illustrious. [*To the MARQUIS.*] Excellency?

MARQUIS. I do not throw my money away like a madman. Go!

FABRIZIO. [*To the COUNT.*] Heaven reward you, Illustrious.

[*To the MARQUIS. MARQUIS crosses L.*] Excellency? [*To himself.*] Cleaned out. Money buys more respect than a title when you are away from home.

[*Exit FABRIZIO C.*]

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to COUNT.*] You cannot impress me with your foolishness. My title is worth more than your money.

COUNT. I value only what I can spend.

MARQUIS. Spend then until you break your neck. [*Crosses R. of table.*] Mirandolina has no respect for you.

COUNT. Do you think she respects you? Money is necessary.

MARQUIS. Money! Patronage! The power to grant favors in an emergency.

COUNT. The power to lend twenty sequins in an emergency.

MARQUIS. The respect of an assured position.

COUNT. Where there is money there is respect.

MARQUIS. You do not understand what you are talking about.

COUNT. I understand better than you do.

[*CAVALIER OF RIPAFRATTA comes from his room L.*]

CAVALIER.⁴ What's all the noise, friends? Arguing?

COUNT. A very pretty point.

MARQUIS. [*Ironically.*] The value of rank.

COUNT. I say nothing against rank. But . . . I insist that money is necessary if you wish to keep out of trouble.

CAVALIER. Really, dear Marquis . . .

MARQUIS. Ah! Let be. Let us talk of something else.

CAVALIER. How did the question come up?

COUNT. Because of the silliest thing you can imagine.

MARQUIS. The Count ridicules everything.

COUNT. The Marquis loves Mirandolina. [*Crosses L. and return.*] I love her too. He claims her love as a tribute to his rank. I hope for it as a reward for my attentions. Isn't the whole question ridiculous?

MARQUIS. I protect her.

COUNT. [*To the CAVALIER.*] I spend on her.

CAVALIER. Well, really, from my point of view, you couldn't be discussing a more unimportant subject. You let women disturb you, upset you? Women! I can't stand them. I regard woman as man's most insupportable infirmity. [*U. C.*]

MARQUIS. [*Follows CAVALIER L.*] Ah! But Mirandolina is an extraordinary person!

COUNT. [*CAVALIER sits.*] As to that, the Marquis is right. The mistress of this inn is remarkable.

MARQUIS. Since I love her, you may be sure there is something unusual about her.

CAVALIER. You make me laugh! What can there be so extraordinary about this woman? Why is she different from other women?

MARQUIS. [*Crosses R.*] She has a charm, a fascination. . . .

COUNT. She is beautiful. She speaks well, dresses well, has good taste in everything.

CAVALIER. I've been here three days and she has not impressed me in the least.

COUNT. Watch her and you'll see.

CAVALIER. I have watched her; she's like all the rest.

MARQUIS. No. She is extraordinary. . . . In all my association with ladies of the highest rank, I have never seen such charm and such dignity combined.

COUNT. Heaven knows I've had plenty of experience with women. I know their foibles and defects. But this one! In spite of my attentions and the money I have spent, I have not been able to touch so much as her little finger.

CAVALIER. It's Art. She's subtle. Do you believe in her, you poor fools? She wouldn't try it on me. Women! Keep 'em away from me, everyone of 'em.

COUNT. Haven't you ever been in love?

CAVALIER. Never, and I never shall be. They've raised the devil trying to give me a wife, but I don't want one.

MARQUIS. You are the last of your house. Don't you want to perpetuate your name?

CAVALIER. I've thought of that many times. But when I think that I'd have to put up with a woman, the desire to have children leaves me quickly.

COUNT. What about your money?

CAVALIER. What little I have I'll enjoy with my friends.

MARQUIS. Bravo, Cavalier. We'll enjoy it together.

COUNT. And you set aside nothing for women?

CAVALIER. Nothing. They shan't feed off me.

COUNT. [*Crosses L.*] Look! Here comes the hostess. Isn't she adorable?

CAVALIER. I'd rather have a hunting dog four to one.

MARQUIS. I respect her if you do not.

CAVALIER. You'd be welcome to her if she were forty times as beautiful as Venus.

[*MIRANDOLINA comes in C.*]

MIRANDOLINA.⁵ My respects to you, gentlemen. Which of you asks for me?

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to MIRANDOLINA.*] I do. But not here.

MIRANDOLINA. Not here, sir—then?

MARQUIS. In my room.

MIRANDOLINA. In your room? If you need anything the waiter will serve you.

MARQUIS. [*To the CAVALIER.*] What do you say to that for dignity?

CAVALIER. [*To the MARQUIS.*] What you call dignity, I call impertinence.

COUNT. My dear Mirandolina, I will speak to you here. I will not trouble you to come to my room. Look at these earrings. Do they please you?

MIRANDOLINA. Beautiful.

COUNT. They are diamonds you know.

MIRANDOLINA. Certainly I know. Even I can recognize a diamond.

COUNT. They are yours if you wish.

CAVALIER. [*Softly to the MARQUIS.*] He is throwing them away.
MIRANDOLINA. Why do you wish to give them to me?

MARQUIS. A wonderful gift. She already has others twice as beautiful.

COUNT. These are set in the latest fashion. I beg you to accept them with my love.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] That man is crazy.

MIRANDOLINA. No. Really . . . sir. . . .

COUNT. You will offend me if you do not take them.

MIRANDOLINA.⁶ I do not know what to say . . . I must be friends with the patrons of my inn . . . I don't want to offend the Count—Well, Count—So as not to offend you I will take them.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] Minx!

COUNT. [*Crosses R. C. to CAVALIER.*] What do you think of her quickness?

CAVALIER. Quick enough. She has an eye to the main chance. Eats them up and doesn't even say thank you.

MARQUIS. You deserve praise, Count. What vanity. Making gifts to a woman in public. Mirandolina, I wish to speak to you alone, without an audience. I am a Cavalier. [*Crosses R. of COUNT.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] Stingy! I won't get anything from him. [*To the others.*] If there is nothing else, I will go.

CAVALIER. [*Rises.*] Here! Wait! The linen you have given me doesn't suit me. If you have no better I will provide my own. [*Disdainfully.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Sir . . . You shall have better. [*Pause.*] But . . . it seems to me you could ask for it politely.

CAVALIER. When I spend money I do not pay compliments.

COUNT. Take pity on him. He is a mortal enemy of women.

CAVALIER. I don't want her pity.

MIRANDOLINA. Poor women! What have they done to you? Why are you so cruel to us?

CAVALIER. Don't take that tone with me. [*Crosses L.*] Change the linen. I'll send my man for it. Friends, your servant. [*He goes.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*After pause.*] The savage.

COUNT. Dear Mirandolina! He doesn't know what a woman you are.

MIRANDOLINA. [*L. C.*] He is outrageous! I shall request him to leave at once.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses L. C.*] I wish you would. If there should be trouble, let me know. I will make him leave. Make use of my protection.

COUNT. [*Crosses L., pushes MARQUIS aside.*] As for the money you will lose, I'll make it up. [*Softly.*] Listen, send the Marquis away, and I'll pay for that too.

MIRANDOLINA. Thank you, thank you, gentlemen! I have enough spirit to say to a stranger that I do not want him here. . . . As for the rest, my rooms never stay vacant.

[*FABRIZIO enters C.*]

FABRIZIO. [*To the COUNT.*] Illustrious, someone is asking for you.

COUNT. Do you know who it is?

FABRIZIO. [*Crosses D. between COUNT and MIRANDOLINA.*] I think it's the jeweler. [*Softly to MIRANDOLINA.*] Take care that you don't get into trouble here. [*Goes C.*]

COUNT. Oh, yes! He has brought something to go with the earrings, Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. No, no, Count.

COUNT. You deserve it, and I think nothing of money. I will see you again, Mirandolina. My respects, Marquis. [*Goes C.*]

MARQUIS. Curse him. He drives me mad with his money.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses R. to table—clears dishes.*] The Count troubles himself too much.

MARQUIS. Such fellows as he will spend every cent they have to feed their vanity. I know the ways of the world.

MIRANDOLINA. Eh! The ways of the world! I know them too.

MARQUIS. Thinking to subdue a woman like you with gifts.

MIRANDOLINA. Well gifts don't upset one.

MARQUIS. It's an insult to seek to put you under obligation with gifts.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Arranging the table.*] Certainly the Marquis has never insulted me in that way.

MARQUIS. I would never offer you such an insult.

MIRANDOLINA. Do you know, I believe you absolutely.

MARQUIS. But where I can serve you, command me.

MIRANDOLINA. But in what way could your Excellency serve me?

MARQUIS. In every way. Try me.

MIRANDOLINA. But? For example? In what?

MARQUIS. Good heavens! You have a charm that overpowers me. [*Tries to kiss her hand—puts hand in plate.*]

MIRANDOLINA. You are too kind, Excellency.

MARQUIS. I could almost be absurd. I could almost curse my title.

MIRANDOLINA. Why, sir?

MARQUIS. I wish I were in the Count's place.

MIRANDOLINA. Because of his money perhaps?

MARQUIS. Ah! Money! It's not worth a fig to me. But . . . if I were a paltry Count!

MIRANDOLINA. What would you do?

MARQUIS. Devil take it! I'd marry you. [*Goes R.*]

MIRANDOLINA.⁷ Listen to that. The most excellent parsimonious Marquis would marry me! [*Crossing back and forth from cupboard at L. to table.*] However, there's a slight difficulty. I would not have him. If I took all who ask I would have many husbands. Everybody who comes to the inn falls in love with me and most of them wish to marry me. [*Knives in hands.*] This clownish cavalier is the first who has not found me pleasant to deal with. I don't say a man should fall in love the second he sets eyes on me. [*R. of table.*] But to despise me . . . to act like a bear. . . . That makes me furious. [*Goes up.*] Enemy of women! [*Knives on table.*] Lunatic!! He will find his match yet. Who knows? Perhaps he has found her already? I'm on my mettle with that man. Those who run after me bore me. [*U. L.*] I am not concerned with rank or money. [*Down with glasses.*] Every woman delights in flattery and adoration, but I don't want to marry. I enjoy my liberty too much. But I'll make every enemy of women bite the dust! Women are the only decent things that God has made. [*FABRIZIO enters C.*]

FABRIZIO. [*L. of MIRANDOLINA.*] Mistress?

MIRANDOLINA. What is it?

FABRIZIO. That stranger who has the middle room is complaining about the linen, says it's coarse and he won't have it.

MIRANDOLINA. I know. I know. He said the same to me. I want him satisfied.

FABRIZIO. Very well. Come with me and put out something else to give him.

MIRANDOLINA. I'll take it to him myself.

FABRIZIO. You will take it?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Sets table.*] Yes, I.

FABRIZIO. This stranger must be very important to you.

MIRANDOLINA. They are all important. Take care.

FABRIZIO. [*To himself.*] I've known all along how it would be. I won't get anywhere. I'm crazy about her but I won't get anywhere.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Drops fork. To herself.*] Poor fool! I must keep him hopeful so he'll serve me faithfully.

FABRIZIO. It has always been the custom for me to serve strangers.

MIRANDOLINA. You are a little too rough.

FABRIZIO. And you are a little too gentle.

MIRANDOLINA. I know what I am about. I do not need suggestions.

FABRIZIO. [*Starts out C.*] Very good. Get another servant. [*Throws napkin in chair L. of table.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*U. C.*] Mr. Fabrizio? Are you cross with me? [*Crosses to him.*]

FABRIZIO. Do you remember what your father said to us before he died?

MIRANDOLINA. When I'm ready to marry I'll remember what my father said.

FABRIZIO. I'm very sensitive. There are some things I can't stand.

MIRANDOLINA.^s What do you think I am? A flirt? A fool? I'm surprised at you! What do I want with strangers who come and go? I treat them well and so keep my inn full. I know who is worth while and I know what befits me. When I'm ready to marry I'll remember my father. [*Throws napkin to FABRIZIO and crosses U. C.*] Whoever has served me well will have no complaint. I am grateful. I appreciate good

men . . . but nobody understands me . . . Suppose you try.
[*She goes C.*]

FABRIZIO. Wants a clever person to understand her. Now she likes me, now she doesn't. I don't know what to think. I could spend my life with her, she suits me so. Better shut my eyes and let things take their course. The others come and go. I am here always. I have the best of it. [*He goes.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Cavalier's room. CAVALIER and his SERVANT at table.

SERVANT. A letter, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. Bring my chocolate. [SERVANT *goes*. CAVALIER *reads letter seated R. of table.*] "Siena. January 1st, 1753." Who's writing? Orazio Toccagni. "Dear Friend, I am writing to ask you to return home at once. Count Manna is dead." Poor Cavalier. I'm sorry to hear that. "He has left his daughter thirty thousand sequins. Your friends want you to have a chance at this fortune and are arranging—" [*Walks about.*] They needn't bother themselves . . . Orazio knows, they all know, I hate women. What do I care for thirty thousand sequins? By myself I get on well with less. With a wife it would take much more than that. A wife! [*Back of table, sits.*] I'd rather have a recurrent fever. [*Enter MARQUIS R.*]

MARQUIS. May I pay you a little visit?

CAVALIER. You honor me.

MARQUIS. [*Pause—snuff box business.*] You and I can talk frankly. That ass of a Count is not worth our consideration.

CAVALIER. Dear Marquis, take a little advice from me. Respect others if you wish to be respected.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to L. of table.*] I am naturally courteous to everybody. You know that. But that man I cannot endure.

CAVALIER. Because he's your rival. Shame. A cavalier like you in love with an innkeeper!

MARQUIS. [*Sits below table.*] She has bewitched me.

CAVALIER. [*Sits above table.*] What foolishness! Bewitched!

Why don't the women bewitch me? Their power lies only in their pretty words and soft ways. Keep away from them and you won't fall under their spell.

[SERVANT *enters with chocolate.*]

MARQUIS. Sometimes I make up my mind . . . oh well. . . .

However, the thing that really bothers me now is my overseer in the country.

CAVALIER. What's he up to?

MARQUIS. I can't trust him.

CAVALIER. Oh, I'm sorry. [*To the SERVANT.*] Make another cup at once.

SERVANT. There is no more in the house, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. Let them get some. [*To the MARQUIS.*] Accept this.

[MARQUIS *takes the chocolate without thanks and drinks as he talks.*]

MARQUIS. My overseer . . . as I was saying . . . [*Drinks.*]

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] And I go without.

[SERVANT *crosses to L. of CAVALIER above table.*]

MARQUIS. He promised to send me twenty sequins.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] I'm in for it.

MARQUIS. And he has not done so. [*Drinks.*]

CAVALIER. Perhaps he will later.

MARQUIS. The point is . . . the point is . . . [*Finishes drinking.*] Here. Take this. [*Hands the cup to the SERVANT who exits R.*] The point is. I am under a great obligation and I don't know . . . ah . . . Well, you, a cavalier, know what it means to be under the necessity of meeting an obligation—

CAVALIER. I am sorry to see you so disturbed. [*To himself.*] I wish I were out of this.

MARQUIS. Would it inconvenience you—for a week or so—to do me the favor . . . ?

CAVALIER. If I could, I would, with all my heart, but I, too, am waiting for money.

MARQUIS. But . . . you . . . cannot be entirely without money.

CAVALIER. Behold my riches! Not two sequins! [*Shows a gold piece and some silver.*]

MARQUIS. There's a gold piece.

CAVALIER. My last. Yes.

MARQUIS. If you will lend me that. . . . I will see. . . .

CAVALIER. But I. . . .

MARQUIS. I will pay it back soon.

CAVALIER. Very well, take it.

MARQUIS. [*Rises.*] My friend, I am grateful. [*Crosses R.*] We will meet at dinner. [*Takes the gold piece and goes.*]

CAVALIER. [*Follows to door—turns back to table.*] Humph! The great Marquis wanted twenty sequins and is content with one. It won't kill me to lose one sequin. If he [*Sits.*] doesn't pay me back he won't come bothering me. I mind more his drinking my chocolate. I am who I am! I am a cavalier! Charming cavalier! The old bore.

[*MIRANDOLINA enters R. hesitantly with the linen.*]

MIRANDOLINA.⁹ You permit me, Illustrious?

CAVALIER. [*Sharply.*] What do you want?

MIRANDOLINA. I have brought some better linen. [*She comes further in.*]

CAVALIER. Good. Put it there. [*Indicates a table.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses to table.*] I beg you will deign to look at it and see if it satisfies your taste.

CAVALIER. What's it like?

MIRANDOLINA. It's very fine. [*She comes further into the room.*]

CAVALIER. Fine?

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, sir. Very fine indeed. See? [*Crosses to him, C.*]

CAVALIER. Enough to give me better than I had.

MIRANDOLINA. These are for cavaliers capable of appreciating them. Because you are you, Illustrious, I give them to you when I would not to another.

CAVALIER. Because I am I. . . . The usual compliment.

MIRANDOLINA. Look at this table cloth.

CAVALIER. [*Looks hard at linen. Pause.*] Flemish linen loses its finish when washed. It's not necessary to spoil this for me.

MIRANDOLINA. For a cavalier like you I would not think of such a little thing. I have a number of these napkins which I will keep for you, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] One can't deny she's obliging.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] A surly face. It could never please a woman.

CAVALIER. Give the linen to my servant or put it somewhere.
No need to bother yourself.

MIRANDOLINA. It's never a bother to serve a cavalier like you.

CAVALIER. All right. All right. That's all. [*To himself.*] Like all women, trying to flatter me.

MIRANDOLINA. Shall I put it in the cupboard?

CAVALIER. [*Gravely.*] Where you will.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses to cupboard R. To herself as she goes to put down the linen.*] He's a bear. I fear I won't get anywhere with him.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] Fools believe these pretty things.

MIRANDOLINA. [*R. C. Returns without the linen.*] What do you wish for dinner, Illustrious?

CAVALIER. I'll eat what there is.

MIRANDOLINA. I want to know your taste. If you like one thing better than another, please say so.

CAVALIER. If I want anything I'll tell the waiter.

MIRANDOLINA. Men pay less attention to such details than women. Would you like a ragout, a sauce? Please tell me.

CAVALIER. Thank you very much. But you can't even in this way succeed in turning me into a fool like the Count and the Marquis.

MIRANDOLINA. The Count and the Marquis! A pretty pair. Making love to me! I have something else to think about. I have no time to listen to them. Of course I'm pleasant because I want to keep them here. But when I see how it affects them it makes me laugh.

CAVALIER. Bravo. Your sincerity pleases me.

MIRANDOLINA. My sincerity is the best thing about me.

CAVALIER. Nevertheless you meet them half way.

MIRANDOLINA. I? Heaven forbid. Ask the gentlemen if I have ever given them a word of encouragement . . . if I have ever given them any foundation for their pretensions. I'm not unpleasant because my interest doesn't permit. But for that. . . . I can't bear effeminate men. I'm not a young girl, I'm not a beauty . . . though I have had my chances. But . . . I don't want to marry, for I love my liberty too much.

CAVALIER. Liberty's a great thing.

MIRANDOLINA. And people throw it away so foolishly.

CAVALIER. I intend to keep mine.

MIRANDOLINA. [*R. C.*] Then you have no wife, Illustrious?

CAVALIER. Heaven forbid. I've no use for women.

MIRANDOLINA. Bravo. The saints preserve you. Women, sir?

Oh, well. It's not for me to speak ill of them.

CAVALIER. You are the first woman I've ever heard talk like that. [*Turns to her.*]

MIRANDOLINA. We innkeepers see a great deal. But really I pity men who are afraid of women.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] She's a strange one.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Starts to go R.*] The Illustrious permits?

CAVALIER. Do you have to go? Are you in a hurry?

MIRANDOLINA. I would not wish to be importunate.

CAVALIER. On the contrary . . . you amuse me.

MIRANDOLINA. You see, sir? That's the way I treat the others.

I stay a moment. I'm gay. I talk nonsense to divert them, and they immediately believe . . . if you understand me . . . they immediately . . . well.

CAVALIER. That happens because you are so charming.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Curtseying.*] You are to kind, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. So they fall in love?

MIRANDOLINA. Isn't it foolish to fall in love with a woman at first sight?

CAVALIER. I've never been able to understand that.

MIRANDOLINA. What amazing strength! What wonderful virility!

CAVALIER. Women! Weak fools!

MIRANDOLINA. So that is what men really think. Sir Cavalier, your hand! [*Crosses to him.*]

CAVALIER. Why should I give you my hand?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Holding out her hands.*] I beg you. Deign. [*Wipes hand on skirt.*] See, they are clean.

CAVALIER. Here's my hand. [*They clasp hands.*]

MIRANDOLINA. This is the first time I've had the honor of taking the hand of a man who is really a man.

CAVALIER. [*Drawing back his hand.*] Well. . . .

MIRANDOLINA. [*Back R. C.*] Listen. If I had taken the hand of one of those susceptible gentlemen, he would have thought I was crazy about him and gone off his head. I would not grant

one of them the simplest liberty for all the gold in the world. They don't understand life. What a pleasure it is to talk freely without sparring or beating about the bush. Pardon my impertinence, Illustrious. If I can serve you, command me. I will show you an attention I have never shown anyone before.

CAVALIER. Why so partial to me?

MIRANDOLINA. Because with you I can act freely without fear that you will misconstrue what I do. You let me serve you without taking advantage of my position.

CAVALIER. [*Aside.*] What the devil is this woman up to?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Aside.*] The bear is getting tame.

CAVALIER. Well, if you need to be about your affairs, don't stay on my account.

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, I must be going. I like to keep an eye on the house. If you need anything, I will send the servant. [*Crosses D. R.*]

CAVALIER. Thanks. But if you come yourself I shall be glad to see you.

MIRANDOLINA. I never go to my patrons' rooms. But perhaps I will come to yours.

CAVALIER. Mine? Why?

MIRANDOLINA. Because, Illustrious, I like you very much.

CAVALIER. You like me?

MIRANDOLINA. I like you because you are a real man and not susceptible. [*To herself.*] Devil take me if he isn't in love before tomorrow. [*Goes.*]

CAVALIER. I know what I'm doing. Women! Hm! But that one could tempt me. Her sincerity, her freedom of speech, are so unusual. She has a quality . . . but just the same I'm not going to fall in love. I could amuse myself with her, but to make love . . . lose my liberty . . . not on my life. A man's a fool to do that. [*Curtain Fast.*]

SCENE III

Room in the inn same as Scene I. ORTENSIA, DEJANIRA, FABRIZIO enter from R.

FABRIZIO.¹⁰ [*Backing in.*] If you will come this way, illustrious ladies. Your rooms are beyond. This room you can use for your guests, your meals, or as you wish.

ORTENSIA. [*Below table.*] Very good, very good. Are you the master or the servant?

FABRIZIO. The servant, at your command, Illustrious.

DEJANIRA. [*Softly to ORTENSIA.*] He gives us titles.

ORTENSIA. Let's play the role. Waiter!

FABRIZIO. Illustrious?

ORTENSIA. [*Crosses L.*] Tell the host to come here.

FABRIZIO. The mistress will come. I will tell her at once. [*To himself.*] Who the deuce can they be? Alone? They look like ladies. [*Goes C.*]

DEJANIRA. [*She and ORTENSIA laugh.*] He gave us titles. He thinks us ladies.

ORTENSIA. [*U. C.*] Good. They'll treat us better.

DEJANIRA. And make us pay more.

ORTENSIA. They'll talk about that to me. I wasn't born yesterday.

DEJANIRA. I don't want to get in trouble with these titles.

ORTENSIA. My dear, you have no spunk. [*Crosses D. C.*] You've played ladies on the stage, can't you do it here?

DEJANIRA. The others will come and show us up.

ORTENSIA. They can't get to Florence today. From Pisa by boat takes at least three days.

DEJANIRA. How stupid to come by boat.

ORTENSIA. Cheap, my dear. It was all we could do to afford the coach.

DEJANIRA. That extra performance was a good idea.

ORTENSIA. If I hadn't stood at the door we wouldn't have made anything. [*Scratches her leg.*]

[FABRIZIO *enters C.*]

FABRIZIO. The mistress will be here immediately.

ORTENSIA. Very good.

FABRIZIO. I beg you to command me. I have served many ladies. I will do my best for you.

ORTENSIA. When I need you I will send for you.

DEJANIRA. [*R. To herself.*] Ortensia plays these parts very well. [*Sits R. of table.*]

FABRIZIO. [*Takes out an inkstand and a little book.*] Will the illustrious ladies do me the honor to favor me with their names for the register? [*Crosses to table U. L.*]

DEJANIRA. [*After pause.*] Now we are in for it.

ORTENSIA. [*L. C.*] Why must I give my name?

FABRIZIO. Innkeepers are obliged to record the name, family name, country and rank of all who lodge with them. If they don't so much the worse for them.

DEJANIRA. [*Softly to ORTENSIA. Sits R. of table.*] Good-bye titles.

ORTENSIA. Many perhaps give fictitious names?

FABRIZIO. We write the names they give and ask no questions.

ORTENSIA. Write, The Baroness Ortensia del Poggio from Palermo. [*Crosses to table sits L.*]

FABRIZIO. [*Writing; to himself.*] Sicilian, um! [*To DEJANIRA.*] And yours, Illustrious?

DEJANIRA. And I . . . [*To ORTENSIA.*] I don't know what to call myself.

ORTENSIA. Come, Countess Dejanira, give him your name.

FABRIZIO. [*To DEJANIRA.*] Please?

DEJANIRA. Didn't you hear?

FABRIZIO. [*Writing.*] The most Illustrious Countess Dejanira . . . the surname?

DEJANIRA. Also the surname?

ORTENSIA. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Dal Sole from Rome.

FABRIZIO. [*Crosses to ORTENSIA.*] That's all that's necessary. Forgive the trouble. The mistress will be here immediately. [*To himself.*] Didn't I say they were ladies? I'll make a good business of it. [*Goes C.*]

DEJANIRA. [*Rise and bows. Laughs.*] The most humble servant of Madame the Baroness.

ORTENSIA. Countess, I bow before you.

DEJANIRA. What fortune offers me this most happy opportunity to proffer you my most profound respects?

ORTENSIA. Torrents of beauty well up from the fountain of your heart.

[*MIRANDOLINA enters C.*]

DEJANIRA. [*To ORTENSIA, caricaturing.*] Madame, you flatter me.

ORTENSIA. [*In the same manner.*] Countess, your charm deserves much more.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself, standing apart U. C.*] What ceremonious ladies.

DEJANIRA. [*Crosses to her.*] I am dying with laughter.

ORTENSIA. [*Softly.*] Be quiet. Here's the hostess.

MIRANDOLINA. [*At door C.*] My respects to you, ladies. [*She bows.*]

ORTENSIA. Good day, young woman.

DEJANIRA. Madame Innkeeper, I salute you.

ORTENSIA. [*Makes a sign to DEJANIRA to keep up the part.*] Ah.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To ORTENSIA.*] Permit me to kiss your hand.

ORTENSIA. [*Giving her hand, MIRANDOLINA kisses hand and curtsies.*] You are very kind.

[*DEJANIRA laughs to herself.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] And you also, Illustrious. [*Crosses between them.*]

DEJANIRA. Oh! No!

ORTENSIA. Come, come. Recognize the courtesy of this young woman. Give her your hand.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] I beg you.

DEJANIRA. Here it is. [*Gives her hand and turns her face aside and laughs.*]

[*DEJANIRA crosses to ORTENSIA back of table.*]

MIRANDOLINA. You laugh, Illustrious. What at?

ORTENSIA. The dear Countess is still laughing at my nonsense. I said something foolish.

MIRANDOLINA. [*R. to herself.*] I wager they are not ladies. Ladies would not be alone.

ORTENSIA. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] About terms?

MIRANDOLINA. [*R. C.*] But . . . are you alone? There are no gentlemen? No servants?

[*DEJANIRA L. C.*]

ORTENSIA. [*C.*] The Baron, my husband . . . [*DEJANIRA laughs aloud crosses to L. of ORTENSIA.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] Why do you laugh, Madame?

ORTENSIA. Yes. Why do you laugh?

DEJANIRA. I am laughing at the Baron, your husband.

ORTENSIA. My husband amuses her. He is always jesting. He will be here soon with Count Orazio, the husband of the little Countess. [*Kicks DEJANIRA.*]

[*DEJANIRA tries to restrain her laughter.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] The Count, your husband, also makes you laugh.

ORTENSIA. Come, little Countess, control yourself.

MIRANDOLINA. My ladies, be gracious. We are alone. No one hears us. This Count and this Baron, they are . . . be frank with me.

ORTENSIA. You doubt our rank? [*Crosses to her. DEJANIRA laughs.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Pardon me, Illustrious. Don't excite yourself. It will make the Countess laugh.

DEJANIRA. Oh, what's the use? [*Sits D. L.*]

ORTENSIA. [*Threatening her.*] Countess, Countess.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] I know what you wish to say, Illustrious.

DEJANIRA. If you know that you are very clever.

MIRANDOLINA. You wish to say what is the use pretending to be ladies . . . when . . . when . . . Isn't it true?

DEJANIRA. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] If you are right, what then?

ORTENSIA. You are a fine comedian! [*Crosses U. C.*] Can't sustain your role.

DEJANIRA. I can't act off the stage.

MIRANDOLINA. Bravo, Madame Baroness. I like your spirit and admire your frankness.

ORTENSIA. [*Crosses D. C.*] Sometimes the devil gets into me.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses to ORTENSIA.*] I love people of spirit. Make yourselves at home in my inn. [*Slaps ORTENSIA on back.*] Oh! here comes the Marquis. He never fails to intrude if he sees women.

ORTENSIA. [*ORTENSIA and DEJANIRA L. C.*] Is he rich?

MIRANDOLINA. I don't know about his affairs.

[*MARQUIS enters R.*]

MARQUIS. May I come in?

ORTENSIA. For my part, you are welcome.

MARQUIS. Your servant, ladies,

DEJANIRA. [*They both curtsy at once and bump into each other.*] Your most humble servant.

ORTENSIA. I salute you profoundly.

MARQUIS. [*R. to MIRANDOLINA.*] They are strangers?

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, Excellency.

ORTENSIA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] An Excellency! Fancy!

DEJANIRA. [*To herself.*] Ortensia already has her eye on him.

MARQUIS. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] Who may these ladies be?

MIRANDOLINA. This is the Baroness Ortensia del Poggio, and this is the Countess Dejanira dal Sole.

MARQUIS. Most charming ladies.

DEJANIRA. [*To herself.*] The mistress is playing the comedy.

ORTENSIA. And you, sir?

MARQUIS. I am the Marquis of Forlipopoli.

ORTENSIA. I am honored to know so delightful a cavalier.

[*Crosses to MARQUIS. Sits L. of table.*]

MARQUIS. If I can serve you, command me. I am glad you have come here. You will have every comfort a good hostess can give.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Between ORTENSIA and DEJANIRA.*] The Marquis is most kind. He honors me with his protection.

MARQUIS. Yes. I protect her and all who come to her inn. If you need anything, command me.

ORTENSIA. If need arise I will avail myself of your kindness.
[*Sits L. of table.*]

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to DEJANIRA.*] Also you, Madame Countess, take advantage of my offer.

DEJANIRA. I shall consider myself happy if I may have the high honor of being counted among your most humble servants.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To ORTENSIA.*] A line from one of her comedies?

ORTENSIA. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] The title of Countess suggests it.

[*The MARQUIS draws from his pocket a fine silk handkerchief and pretends to wipe his forehead with it.*]

MIRANDOLINA. A fine handkerchief, Marquis.

MARQUIS. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] You like it? I have good taste, you think?

MIRANDOLINA. Certainly. Excellent taste.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to ORTENSIA.*] Have you ever seen a finer one?

ORTENSIA. It's beautiful. I've never seen its equal. [*To herself.*]

If he offered it to me, I'd take it.

MARQUIS. [*To DEJANIRA.*] It came from London.

DEJANIRA. It's lovely. I like it very much.

MARQUIS. It is in good taste, is it not?

DEJANIRA. [*Crosses back of MARQUIS, sits back of table R. To herself.*] He doesn't say, it's at your service.

MARQUIS. The Count throws away his money. He does not know how to choose a trinket in good taste. [*Sits left below door.*]

MIRANDOLINA. The Marquis is a connoisseur.

MARQUIS. [*Folding the handkerchief carefully.*] I must fold it that it may not be spoiled. You must take care of a handkerchief of this sort. [*Rises. Gives it to MIRANDOLINA.*] Here!

MIRANDOLINA. Shall I have it put in your room?

MARQUIS. No. In yours.

MIRANDOLINA. Why in mine, Excellency?

MARQUIS. Because I give it to you.

MIRANDOLINA. But . . . I do not wish . . .

MARQUIS. Do not offend me.

MIRANDOLINA. The Marquis knows I do not wish to offend him.

So that you may not be angry . . . I will take it.

DEJANIRA. [*To ORTENSIA.*] A pretty play.

ORTENSIA. [*To DEJANIRA.*] Yet they talk of actresses.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to ORTENSIA. To ORTENSIA.*] What do you say to that? A present like that to the mistress of an inn?

ORTENSIA. A generous cavalier.

MARQUIS. I am always generous.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] The first present he has made me.

I wonder how he came by it.

DEJANIRA. I would like to have one like it. Could I find it in Florence? [*ORTENSIA pushes DEJANIRA on bench.*]

MARQUIS. It might be difficult, but we will see.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] Bravo, little Countess.

ORTENSIA. Marquis, you know the city, can you send me a good bootmaker?

MARQUIS. [*DEJANIRA rises, crosses R. of table, D. C.*] I will send my own.

MIRANDOLINA. He will promise anything. They will be good and mad when they find out. . . .

ORTENSIA. Dear Marquis will you favor us with a little of your company?

DEJANIRA. Why not dine with us?

MARQUIS. I will gladly. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] Do not be jealous. You know I am yours.

MIRANDOLINA. Amuse yourself. It's all one to me.

ORTENSIA. You will entertain us?

DEJANIRA. We know no one here but you.

MARQUIS. My dear young ladies, I will do my best.

[*COUNT enters L.*]

COUNT. [*L.*] I have been looking for you, Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. I'm here with these ladies.

COUNT. Ladies, I salute you.

ORTENSIA. Your humble servant. [*To DEJANIRA.*] A better catch than the other.

DEJANIRA. [*Softly to ORTENSIA.*] I'm not good at angling.

MARQUIS. [*Softly to MIRANDOLINA.*] Show the handkerchief to the Count.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Shows the handkerchief.*] Oh, Count! See the beautiful present the Marquis gave me.

COUNT. [*Crosses to MARQUIS.*] Wonderful! Bravo, Sir Marquis.

MARQUIS. It's nothing. A mere trifle. What I do no one need know. Put it away, Mirandolina. Don't talk about it.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] "No one need know." Yet he made me show it.

COUNT. If these ladies will permit I would like a word.

ORTENSIA. By all means.

MARQUIS. [*R. C. To MIRANDOLINA.*] Don't spoil the handkerchief in your pocket.

MIRANDOLINA. I'll wrap it up in cotton.

COUNT. [*C. To MIRANDOLINA.*] Look at this pendant.

MIRANDOLINA. [*L. C.*] Lovely.

COUNT. It matches the earrings.

[*ORTENSIA and DEJANIRA sit and talk together.*]

MIRANDOLINA. It is even more beautiful.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses U. To himself.*] Curse the Count. Curse his

diamonds and his money and the devil that brought him here.

COUNT. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] I want you to have it.

MIRANDOLINA. No. Absolutely. I cannot take it.

COUNT. Don't be ill mannered.

MIRANDOLINA. Oh! I'm never ill mannered. Very well, not to offend you I will take it. Look Marquis! Isn't this a beauty?

[*Crosses to MARQUIS.*]

MARQUIS. Of its kind, the handkerchief is in better taste.

[*MIRANDOLINA crosses to ORTENSIA and DEJANIRA.*]

COUNT. There's a *difference* between them.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to COUNT.*] A pretty thing to pride yourself in public on your extravagance.

COUNT. *You make your gifts in secret.*

MIRANDOLINA. [*Shows pendant to ladies and crosses U. C. To herself.*] When two quarrel a third profits.

MARQUIS. And so, ladies, I will meet you at dinner.

ORTENSIA. [*Crosses to COUNT with DEJANIRA. To the COUNT.*]

And this gentleman . . . may I ask?

COUNT. I am the Count of Albasiorita, at your command.

DEJANIRA. A fine family.

COUNT. [*To DEJANIRA.*] Your servant.

ORTENSIA. [*To the COUNT.*] You are staying here?

COUNT. Yes, Madame.

DEJANIRA. You will remain some time?

COUNT. I think so.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses D. R.*] Ladies, you must be tired standing.

Would you like me to escort you to your apartment?

ORTENSIA. [*Disdainfully.*] I thank you. [*To the COUNT.*]

Where is your home, Count?

COUNT. Naples.

ORTENSIA. We are almost compatriots. I am from Palermo.

DEJANIRA. [*Pushes ORTENSIA aside.*] I am from Rome. But I have *been* in Naples. I have some business at the moment.

. . . I have been wanting to talk to someone from Naples.

COUNT. I am glad to be of service to you. Are you alone, ladies?

Are there no gentlemen with you?

MARQUIS. I am here, sir. They do not need you.

ORTENSIA. We are alone, Count. Presently I will tell you why.

COUNT. [*Crosses R.*] Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. Sir?

COUNT. Have them make ready for three in my room. [*Crosses D. R.*] You will deign to favor me, ladies?

ORTENSIA. We accept your courtesy.

MARQUIS. But these ladies invited me. . . .

COUNT. They can do as they please. My table seats only three.

MARQUIS. Am I . . .

ORTENSIA. [*Takes COUNT's arm.*] Let us go, Count. The Marquis will favor us another time.

DEJANIRA. [*On COUNT's other arm. Laughs.*] Marquis, if you find another handkerchief, remember . . . [*They go out.*]

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to COUNT.*] Count, you will answer to me for this.

COUNT. [*L. C.*] What cause have you to complain?

MARQUIS. [*C.*] I am who I am. . . . One does not with impunity—[*Walks up and down.*] She wants a handkerchief.

[*Crosses R. C.*] She will not get it. Mirandolina, treasure yours. You can't find one like it every day. Diamonds, yes. But a handkerchief like that. . . . [*He goes R.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] The poor fool.

COUNT. Mirandolina, my dear, do you mind if I show these ladies attention?

MIRANDOLINA. Not at all, sir.

COUNT. I do it for your sake to increase the profits of your inn.

But remember, my heart and fortune are yours to use as you will. [*Bows.*] I make you their mistress. [*Bows. Goes L.*]

MIRANDOLINA. I wouldn't have him if he were strung with diamonds. As for the Marquis with his ridiculous protection, bah! Of course, if I had to decide between them I'd choose the one with money . . . but I have other things to interest me. I may not be an actress, but if that Cavalier, the Count of Ripafratta, stays long enough. . . . Those women will be useful. They will keep the Count and Marquis busy and leave me free to conquer the Cavalier. Give a woman time and the devil himself will fall sooner or later. [*She goes.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE I

CAVALIER'S *room. Table set for dinner.*

CAVALIER and his SERVANT. Then FABRIZIO. CAVALIER *walks up and down with a book.* FABRIZIO *puts soup on the table.*

FABRIZIO } *at table L.*
SERVANT }

FABRIZIO. [*To the SERVANT.*] Tell your master that the soup is on the table.

SERVANT. Why don't you tell him?

FABRIZIO. It is a funny thing, but I don't like to speak to him.

SERVANT. He isn't a bad sort. Can't bear the sight of women but he's pleasant enough with men.

FABRIZIO. [*To himself.*] Can't bear the sight of women. Poor fool. [*He goes.*]

SERVANT. If you please, Illustrious, dinner is on the table.

CAVALIER. [*Puts down the book and seats himself.*] It seems to me we are having dinner earlier than usual.

SERVANT. [*Behind the CAVALIER'S chair, serving him.*] This room was served first. The Count of Albafiorita made a row, but the mistress paid no attention.

CAVALIER. I am obliged to her for her consideration.

SERVANT. She is an accomplished woman, Illustrious. I've never seen such an attractive innkeeper.

[CAVALIER *turns toward the SERVANT.*]

CAVALIER. You like her, eh?

SERVANT. If it were not for you, I would like to stay here. [*Takes soup tureen.*]

CAVALIER. What do you think she would do with you?

SERVANT. I would serve her like a little dog. [*Goes R.*]

CAVALIER. She bewitches everybody. Wouldn't it be a joke if she bewitched me? Tomorrow I go to Leghorn. She can try

today if she wishes. But she will have to work hard to overcome my hatred of women.

[SERVANT comes from R. with a chicken. Crosses L. to CAVALIER.]

SERVANT. The mistress says if you don't like chicken she will send you a squab.

CAVALIER. I am satisfied with anything. What is this?

SERVANT. The mistress says she wants to know if the Illustrious is pleased with this sauce. She made it herself.

CAVALIER. She puts me under obligation. [*Tries it.*] It is excellent. Tell her I like it and thank her.

SERVANT. I will tell her, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. Go and tell her at once.

SERVANT. Immediately. [*To himself.*] What! Sending a compliment to a woman. Ha! Ha! [*He goes R.*]

CAVALIER. This sauce is delicious. I never tasted better. [*Eating.*] Certainly this inn will always be full if Mirandolina treats all her guests like this. Fine linen, good table, and one can't deny she's charming. But the thing that delights me is her sincerity. Sincerity—that is the thing. Why can't I abide women? Because they are deceitful, liars, flatterers. But her sincerity!

[SERVANT comes back from R.]

SERVANT [*R. C.*] She thanks the Illustrious for his goodness in being pleased with her small efforts.

CAVALIER. Bravo, Majordomo.

SERVANT. She is preparing another dish but I don't know what it is.

CAVALIER. She is preparing it?

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

CAVALIER. Give me something to drink.

SERVANT. At once. [*Goes U. R. for wine, uncorks bottle.*]

CAVALIER. I shall have to return her generosity. She is too kind.

I must pay double. I'll treat her well but I'll go away soon.

[SERVANT gives him wine R. table.] The Count is dining?
[*He drinks.*]

SERVANT. Yes, Illustrious. Two ladies are dining with him.
[*Takes bottle U. R.*]

CAVALIER. Two ladies? Who are they?

SERVANT. [*Crosses to L. of CAVALIER.*] They came only a few hours ago. I don't know who they are.

CAVALIER. Friends of the Count?

SERVANT. I don't think so. But as soon as he saw them he invited them to dine.

CAVALIER. As soon as he saw them. The fool. Heaven knows who they are. I suppose it's enough for him that they are women. Is the Marquis dining?

SERVANT. He went out and hasn't been seen since.

CAVALIER. Take this. I've finished.

SERVANT. [*SERVANT takes dish.*] At once. [*Exit R.*]

CAVALIER. Dining with two ladies. It would take away my appetite.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Comes with a dish in her hand from R. followed by SERVANT.*] It is permitted?

CAVALIER. Here! Who's out there?

SERVANT. You called, sir?

CAVALIER. Take that dish from the mistress.

MIRANDOLINA. Permit me to have the honor of putting the dish on the table with my own hands.

CAVALIER. That is not your business.

MIRANDOLINA. Oh, sir! Who am I? A lady? I am only the servant of those who deign to favor my inn. [*U. R.*]

CAVALIER. What humility.

MIRANDOLINA. [*L. of CAVALIER.*] I could easily wait on everyone. But . . . for certain reasons, I don't. I don't know if you understand me. But I can come here without scruple, freely.

CAVALIER. I thank you. What is this?

MIRANDOLINA. A ragout made with my own hands.

CAVALIER. It is sure to be good if you made it.

MIRANDOLINA. You are too kind, sir. I don't know how to do anything well but I would like to know so that I might please the taste of so kind a cavalier.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] Leghorn tomorrow. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] If you have anything to do, don't put yourself out for me.

MIRANDOLINA. I have nothing to do, sir. The house is well pro-

vided with servants. I would like to know if this dish pleases your taste.

CAVALIER. Certainly, at once. [*Tastes it.*] Good! Delicious! What a flavor! I don't know what it is.

MIRANDOLINA. Oh, sir, I have special secrets. I can make good things.

CAVALIER. [*To the SERVANT vehemently.*] Give me the wine. [*Drinks.*]

MIRANDOLINA. With this dish, sir, you must have good wine.

CAVALIER. [*To the SERVANT.*] Give me the Burgundy.

MIRANDOLINA. Bravo. That is a fine wine. To my mind it is the best one can drink with a meal.

[*SERVANT brings bottle and glass to table. Takes first glass back.*]

CAVALIER. You have good taste in everything. [*Pours wine.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Indeed, I don't make many mistakes.

CAVALIER. And yet you are mistaken this time.

MIRANDOLINA. In what, sir?

CAVALIER. In believing that I deserve special attention.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Sighing.*] Oh, sir.

CAVALIER. [*Beginning to change.*] Why do you sigh? What is the matter?

MIRANDOLINA. I do my best for everybody. It makes me sad that there are those who are ungrateful.

CAVALIER. [*Complacently.*] I will not be an ingrate.

MIRANDOLINA. With you I am not trying to acquire merit. I am only doing my duty.

CAVALIER. [*Pours wine.*] I understand. I am not so uncouth as you have reason to think me. You will have no further cause to complain of me.

MIRANDOLINA. But . . . Sir . . . I do not mean . . .

CAVALIER. To your health. [*Drinks.*]

MIRANDOLINA. I am most obliged. You do me too much honor.

CAVALIER. This is excellent wine.

MIRANDOLINA. I like Burgundy.

CAVALIER. If you wish it is yours. [*Offers the wine.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Oh. Thanks, sir.

CAVALIER. Have you dined?

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. Will you have a little glass?

MIRANDOLINA. I do not deserve such favor.

CAVALIER. Really, I'd be glad if you'd take it.

MIRANDOLINA. I don't know what to say. I accept your courtesy.

CAVALIER. [*To SERVANT.*] Bring a glass.

MIRANDOLINA. No, no. Permit me. I will take this. [*Takes CAVALIER's glass.*]

CAVALIER. Stop. I've used that.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Laughing.*] I will drink to your good looks.

[*SERVANT comes with another glass, which he puts on tray.*]

CAVALIER. Flatterer. [*Pours another glass.*]

MIRANDOLINA. It is some time since I have eaten. This may go to my head.

CAVALIER. No danger.

MIRANDOLINA. Will you give me a bite of bread?

CAVALIER. Gladly. Here. [*Gives her bread.*] Take it. [*MIRANDOLINA, with the wine in one hand and bread in other shows that she is ill at ease and does not know how to dip bread into wine.*] You are not comfortable. Won't you sit down?

MIRANDOLINA. Oh! I am unworthy of so much honor, sir.

CAVALIER. Come, come. We are alone. [*To SERVANT.*] Bring a chair.

MIRANDOLINA. It won't be good for me if the Count and the Marquis find this out.

CAVALIER. Why?

MIRANDOLINA. A hundred times they have asked me to eat and drink with them and I have always refused.

CAVALIER. Come. Make yourself comfortable.

MIRANDOLINA. To obey you. [*She sits L. of table and dips bread into wine.*]

CAVALIER. [*Softly to SERVANT.*] Listen. Don't tell anyone that the mistress is seated at my table.

SERVANT. [*R. of table.*] Never fear. [*To himself.*] This is a surprising turn.

MIRANDOLINA. To everything that gives you pleasure, sir.

CAVALIER. Thank you, little hostess.

MIRANDOLINA. My toast has nothing to do with women.

CAVALIER. Why not?

MIRANDOLINA. I know you can't abide women.

CAVALIER. You're right. I've never been able to abide them.

MIRANDOLINA. Bravo. May you never change.

CAVALIER. I would not like . . . [*Looks at SERVANT.*]

MIRANDOLINA. What, sir?

CAVALIER. [*Speaking in her ear.*] That you should make me change.

MIRANDOLINA. I, sir? How?

CAVALIER. [*To the SERVANT.*] Go.

SERVANT. You want something?

CAVALIER. Two eggs. Go.

SERVANT. How do you want them?

CAVALIER. Any way you like. Hurry!

SERVANT. Very good, sir. [*To himself.*] I understand. [*Goes R.*]

CAVALIER. Mirandolina, you are a delightful young woman.

MIRANDOLINA. You are making fun of me.

CAVALIER. Listen. I want to tell you something. It's a feather in your cap.

MIRANDOLINA. I would like to hear it.

CAVALIER. You are the first woman I've ever enjoyed talking to.

MIRANDOLINA. It is no credit to me. Sometimes currents meet. Sometimes they flow between people who hardly know each other. I, too, feel for you something I've never felt for anyone else.

CAVALIER. Are you trying to make me lose my head?

MIRANDOLINA. You are so wise, Illustrious. You wouldn't waste time on me. I am in no way your equal. It is because I'm sure of that that I come here. I, too, feel something . . . I don't know what it is . . . I've never felt before for anyone. But I have no intention of losing my head over a man who hates women, who is trying perhaps to disarm me and means afterwards to laugh at me. . . . Mr. Cavalier, will you give me another glass of Burgundy?

CAVALIER. Eh? Oh . . . well. [*Pours wine in glass.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] He's on the point of giving in.

CAVALIER. [*Giving her the glass of wine.*] Here.

MIRANDOLINA. I am most obliged. But . . . you are not drinking?

CAVALIER. Yes. I'll drink. If I get drunk maybe one devil will chase out the other.

MIRANDOLINA. Sir . . . Cavalier. . . .

CAVALIER. What now?

MIRANDOLINA. A toast? [*Makes him touch her glass with his.*]

Long live good friends!

CAVALIER. [*Languishingly.*] Long may they live.

MIRANDOLINA. Long live good friends who. . . .

CAVALIER. Good friends. Long may they live.

[*MARQUIS comes in R.*]

MARQUIS. It is I. Who is it lives?

CAVALIER. [*Changed.*] What do you wish, Marquis?

MARQUIS. Pardon me, friend. I called. But there was no answer.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Starting to go.*] With your permission. . . .
[*Starts up, then sits.*]

CAVALIER. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] Don't go. [*To MARQUIS.*] I would not take such a liberty with you.

MARQUIS. I ask your pardon. I—I thought you were alone. It is a pleasure to see you with our little mistress. What do you say? Isn't she adorable?

MIRANDOLINA. Sir, I came to serve the Cavalier. I felt a little ill and he gave me a glass of Burgundy.

MARQUIS. [*To CAVALIER.*] Is that Burgundy?

CAVALIER. Yes. It's Burgundy.

MARQUIS. Real Burgundy?

CAVALIER. That's what I paid for.

MARQUIS. I am a connoisseur. Let me taste it. I can tell you.

CAVALIER. [*Calling.*] Here. [*SERVANT comes with eggs, stands C.*] A little glass for the Marquis.

MARQUIS. Not such a little one. Burgundy is not liqueur. To judge it one must drink enough.

SERVANT. Here are the eggs. [*Tries to put them on table.*]

CAVALIER. I don't want anything more.

MARQUIS. What is that?

CAVALIER. Eggs.

MARQUIS. I don't like them.

[*SERVANT takes them away U. R. to buffet.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Marquis, with the Cavalier's permission, taste this ragout. I made it myself.

MARQUIS. Certainly. [*Calling.*] A chair. [*SERVANT brings a chair from L. of buffet, puts glass on table.*] A fork.

CAVALIER. Lay a place for him.

[*SERVANT goes for things U. R.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Cavalier, I'm better. I will go now. [*She rises.*]

MARQUIS. Do me the favor. Stay a little longer.

MIRANDOLINA. I must attend to my affairs. And then the Cavalier . . .

MARQUIS. [*To CAVALIER.*] You are willing she should stay?

CAVALIER. Why do you wish it?

MARQUIS. I want you to taste a tiny glass of Cypress wine.

You've never seen anything like it since you came into the world. And I would like Mirandolina to taste it too.

CAVALIER. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] So. To please the Marquis, stay.

MIRANDOLINA. The Marquis can do without me.

MARQUIS. Don't you want to taste it?

MIRANDOLINA. Another time, Excellency.

CAVALIER. Come, come, stay.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To the CAVALIER.*] You command me?

CAVALIER. Stay.

MIRANDOLINA. I obey. [*Sits down again.*]

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] Always putting me under obligation.

MARQUIS. [*Eating.*] Oh, what a ragout. What an odor! What a flavor!

CAVALIER. [*Softly to MIRANDOLINA.*] The Marquis will be jealous if you are near me.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Softly to CAVALIER.*] It is of no importance to me.

CAVALIER. Are you an enemy of men?

MIRANDOLINA. As you are of women.

CAVALIER. My enemies will be revenged.

MIRANDOLINA. How, sir?

CAVALIER. Shrewd one. You see very well.

MARQUIS. Friends, your health. [*Drinks Burgundy.*]

CAVALIER. Well. How is it?

MARQUIS. [*Pouring another glass.*] Well, if I must say it, it's rather poor. Try my Cypress wine.

CAVALIER. But where is this Cypress wine?

MARQUIS. I have it here. We must enjoy it together. This is a wine. [*Takes out a very small bottle.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Evidently Marquis, you don't mean it to go to our heads.

MARQUIS. This? You drink this in drops. It is like Spirits of Melissa. [*Calling.*] Here. Little glasses. *Opens bottle.* SERVANT *brings little glasses.*] Too large. Have you none smaller? [*Covers bottle with hand.*]

CAVALIER. [*To SERVANT.*] Bring liqueur glasses.

MIRANDOLINA. I think it will suffice to smell it.

MARQUIS. [*Smelling it.*] It has a delicious fragrance. [*SERVANT brings three little glasses on tray. MARQUIS pours very slowly and fills the glasses, gives one to the CAVALIER, one to MIRANDOLINA, and one for himself. Corks the bottle well.*] What nectar! [*Drinking.*] What ambrosia! Distilled manna!

CAVALIER. [*Softly to MIRANDOLINA.*] What do you think of this swill?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Softly to CAVALIER.*] Dregs.

MARQUIS. [*To CAVALIER.*] Well? What have you to say?

CAVALIER. Excellent.

MARQUIS. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] And Mirandolina. Do you like it?

MIRANDOLINA. For my part, sir, I cannot dissimulate. I do not like it. I detest it. I cannot say it is good. I admire those who can pretend, but those who pretend in one thing are apt to do so in another.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] Hitting at me. I wonder why?

MARQUIS. Mirandolina, you cannot appreciate this wine. I'm sorry. You knew the handkerchief I gave you was fine, so you liked that but you don't know anything about Cypress wine.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Softly to CAVALIER.*] Do you hear how he boasts?

CAVALIER. [*Softly to MIRANDOLINA.*] I wouldn't do that.

MIRANDOLINA. You boast that you despise women.

CAVALIER. You boast that you conquer all men.

MIRANDOLINA. Not all.

CAVALIER. [*Softly, with passion.*] Yes. All.

MARQUIS. [*Calling.*] You! Bring three little glasses.

[*SERVANT brings them on a tray R. of MARQUIS.*]

MIRANDOLINA. For my part I want no more.

MARQUIS. Never fear. Good fellow, with your master's permission go to the Count of Albafiorita and say from me, loud so that all may hear, that I beg him to taste a little of my Cypress wine.

SERVANT. Very good sir. [*To himself.*] Not enough to make them drunk. [*Goes R.*]

CAVALIER. You are very generous, Marquis.

MARQUIS. What do you say to that, Mirandolina?

MIRANDOLINA. Of course.

MARQUIS. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] Has the Cavalier seen the handkerchief I gave you?

MIRANDOLINA. Not yet.

MARQUIS. [*To CAVALIER.*] You will see it. [*Puts away bottle with a tiny bit of wine left.*] I will save this bit of balsam for the evening.

MIRANDOLINA. Be careful it does not make you ill, Marquis.

MARQUIS. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] Do you know what it is that makes me ill?

MIRANDOLINA. What?

MARQUIS. Your beautiful eyes.

MIRANDOLINA. Really?

MARQUIS. Cavalier, I'm desperately in love with her.

CAVALIER. I am sorry to hear it.

MARQUIS. [*R. of CAVALIER.*] You've never been in love, or you would pity me.

CAVALIER. I do, from the bottom of my heart.

MARQUIS. I'm jealous as . . . I let her stay near you because I know your sentiments. Otherwise I would not suffer it for twenty thousand sequins.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] This fellow bores me.

[*SERVANT comes with a bottle on a tray from R.*]

SERVANT. [*To MARQUIS.*] The Counts thanks your Excellency and sends you a bottle of Canary wine.

MARQUIS. He puts his Canary wine against my Cypress. Fool! Let's have it. [*Exit SERVANT R.*] Poor stuff! I can tell from the smell. [*He gets up, taking the bottle.*]

CAVALIER. Well, taste it at least.

MARQUIS. I don't want to taste it. The Count's impertinent.

Always putting me down, always making me angry. I swear to heaven I'll get even with him. [*Crosses R.*] Mirandolina, if you don't turn him out . . . if you don't turn him out, something terrible will happen, something terrible. I am who I am. I will not suffer such affronts. [*Goes with bottle R.*]

CAVALIER. The Marquis is mad.

MIRANDOLINA. If his rage makes him ill he has the wine to restore him.

CAVALIER. He is mad I say. And you have made him so.

MIRANDOLINA. Am I a woman who maddens men?

CAVALIER. [*With perturbation.*] Yes! You are!

MIRANDOLINA. [*Rises.*] Cavalier . . . with your permission.

CAVALIER. [*Rises.*] Stop.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Going R.*] Pardon. I do not wish to madden anyone.

CAVALIER. Listen to me. [*He rises but stays near the table.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Going.*] Excuse me.

CAVALIER. [*Imperiously.*] Stop, I tell you!

MIRANDOLINA. [*R. of CAVALIER. Changed, turning towards him.*] Just what is it you want of me?

CAVALIER. [*Confused.*] Nothing. . . . Let's drink another glass of Burgundy.

MIRANDOLINA. Quickly then. Quickly. I must go.

CAVALIER. Sit down.

MIRANDOLINA. I prefer to stand.

CAVALIER. [*Gently, giving her a glass.*] Take this.

MIRANDOLINA. Thank you. A toast before I go. One my grandmother taught me.

Flower of love; fruit of the vine;
Bring to my soul a joy divine;
Wine through the lips, Love through the eyes;

Look in my eyes
As I drink the wine . . .

My heart tells your heart
What your heart tells mine.

[*Sings last two lines as she goes R.*]

CAVALIER. [*Walking up and down.*] Bravo, bravo, Mirandolina!
[*Sings last two lines.*] She's run away, the little rogue, and left me with a hundred devils to torment me.

SERVANT. [*Enters R.*] You are ready for the fruit, Illustrious?

CAVALIER. Go to the devil. "At once, Illustrious." [SERVANT *leaves R.*] My heart tells your heart what your heart tells mine. What a strange toast. Curse you, you are trying to get the better of me. But you are so charming, so ingratiating . . . You're rousing the devil in me. No! I'll go to Leghorn. I won't see you again. I won't let you come near me. Curse women! Curse 'em, Curse 'em. [*Curtain fast.*]

SCENE II

The COUNT's room. Door L. open. COUNT OF ALBAFIORITA, ORTENSIA, DEJANIRA. Loud laughter at Curtain and through first speech.

COUNT. The Marquis of Forlipopoli is a curious person. He and his father between them have squandered all their fortune, he has hardly enough to live on and yet he tries still to play the grand gentleman.

ORTENSIA. He would so like to be generous.

DEJANIRA. And the whole world must know it.

COUNT. A comedy character. You'll have fun with him if you keep up your little pretense.

ORTENSIA. I'd do it fast enough but Dejanira won't play up.

DEJANIRA. It makes me laugh so when anybody thinks I'm a lady.

COUNT. You did well to let me into the game. I may be able to do something for you. But I will be frank with you. Certain obligations . . . will not permit me to visit your house.

ORTENSIA. A love affair?

COUNT. Yes. In confidence, the mistress.

ORTENSIA. An innkeeper!

DEJANIRA. Why not an actress?

COUNT. That would not suit me. You are here today and gone tomorrow.

ORTENSIA. It's much better so. Friendships are short and men do not ruin themselves.

COUNT. Well, in any case, I am pledged. I will do nothing to offend her.

DEJANIRA. What's so attractive about her?

COUNT. She is much more than attractive.

ORTENSIA. Dejanira! She is beautiful.

COUNT. She is wonderful.

DEJANIRA. You don't compare her with us?

COUNT. [*Rises.*] That's enough! If you want to keep my friendship . . .

ORTENSIA. [*Rises, makes COUNT sit.*] All right, all right, Count.

To please you I'll say she is the Goddess Venus. [*Sits.*]

COUNT. That's better. [*Looking off stage.*] Did you see the man who passed through the coffee room?

ORTENSIA. Yes.

COUNT. Another comedy character. . . . He can't bear the sight of women. Can't even bear Mirandolina.

ORTENSIA. I wager I could make him change his ways. [*Crosses U. R.*]

DEJANIRA. Oh, good! Let's try it.

COUNT. If you can make him fall in love, on my word as cavalier I'll give you a prize.

ORTENSIA. I would do it for my own sport.

DEJANIRA. So would I.

COUNT. I doubt if you can.

ORTENSIA. The Count has a poor opinion of us.

DEJANIRA. We may not be as charming as Mirandolina . . . but . . . for all that.

COUNT. Shall we send for him?

ORTENSIA. As you wish. [*D. R.*]

COUNT. [*Calling.*] Who's out there? [*FABRIZIO enters L.*] Ask the Cavalier of Ripafratta to do me the favor of coming here.

I wish very much to speak with him.

FABRIZIO. He is not in his room.

COUNT. I saw him go towards the kitchen.

FABRIZIO. Very good, sir. [*Goes.*]

COUNT. [*To himself.*] I wager he's giving Mirandolina a piece of his mind because he didn't like his dinner.

ORTENSIA. [*Sits R. of him.*] Count, I asked the Marquis to send me his bootmaker, but I fear. . . .

COUNT. I'll attend to it.

DEJANIRA. [*Sits L. of him.*] The Marquis promised me a handkerchief.

COUNT. We will find handkerchiefs.

DEJANIRA. The trouble is . . . I really need one now.

COUNT. [*Offering his.*] Take this one. It is quite clean.

DEJANIRA. Thank you so much.

COUNT. Here comes the Cavalier. Pretend you are ladies and he will be polite. Keep back a little so he won't see you.
[*Pushes DEJANIRA back.*]

ORTENSIA. [*Crosses R.*] What's his name?

COUNT. He's the Cavalier of Ripafratta, a Tuscan.

DEJANIRA. Has he a wife?

COUNT. I told you he couldn't bear the sight of women.

ORTENSIA. [*Drawing back a little.*] Is he rich?

COUNT. Yes, very.

DEJANIRA. [*Drawing back a little.*] Generous?

COUNT. More or less.

DEJANIRA. Come on. Come on. [*Going further back.*]

ORTENSIA. Give us time and never fear.

[CAVALIER enters L. Crosses R. C.]

CAVALIER. You want me, Count?

COUNT. Yes. Thank you for coming.

CAVALIER. What can I do for you?

COUNT. [*Motions towards the two women who come forward.*]
These two ladies need your help.

CAVALIER. [*Starts to go. COUNT stops him.*] I am sorry, but . . .

ORTENSIA. [*Crosses L.*] Cavalier, I do not mean to detain you.

DEJANIRA. [*Crosses L.*] Just the courtesy of a word.

CAVALIER. Ladies, I beg you to excuse me. I . . .

ORTENSIA. [*C.*] One little word I implore you.

DEJANIRA. [*C.*] Two little words, not more.

CAVALIER. [*L. C. To himself.*] Damn the Count.

COUNT. [*L.*] Friend, courtesy demands that you listen.

CAVALIER. [*To the women, seriously.*] Pardon me. In what way can I serve you?

ORTENSIA. You are Tuscan, sir?

CAVALIER. Yes, madame.

DEJANIRA. You have friends in Florence?

CAVALIER. Yes, madame.

DEJANIRA. You must know, sir— [*To ORTENSIA*] You begin.

ORTENSIA. I will tell you, Cavalier. You may know a certain. . . .

CAVALIER. Speak ladies, I beg of you . . .

COUNT. I understand. My presence embarrasses you. I will go.

Confide freely in the Cavalier. [*Leaving.*]

CAVALIER. No, no, don't go.

COUNT. It would not be tactful to remain. Your servant, ladies.

[*Goes L.*]

ORTENSIA. [*Crosses D. L. of CAVALIER.*] Let us sit down.

CAVALIER. Pardon. I prefer to stand.

DEJANIRA. [*R. of CAVALIER.*] Such a rustic with ladies.

CAVALIER. Again I beg you. Tell me what you wish.

ORTENSIA. We need your protection, your kindness.

CAVALIER. What has happened to you?

DEJANIRA. Our husbands have abandoned us.

CAVALIER. [*Changed.*] Abandoned you. Two ladies abandoned!

Who are your husbands?

DEJANIRA. [*To ORTENSIA.*] I can't go on.

ORTENSIA. [*To herself.*] I'm confused myself.

CAVALIER. [*On point of leaving.*] Ladies, I salute you.

ORTENSIA. What! You are leaving us?

DEJANIRA. A cavalier?

CAVALIER. Forgive me. I value my peace. I hear that two ladies are abandoned by their husbands. There would be many complications. I cannot be involved. Ladies, I salute you. I cannot give you counsel or aid.

ORTENSIA. Let's not keep this attractive cavalier in awe of us any longer.

DEJANIRA. Yes, let's be frank.

CAVALIER. What kind of talk is this?

ORTENSIA. We are not ladies.

CAVALIER. Not? . . .

DEJANIRA. The Count only wanted to play a joke on you.

- CAVALIER. My compliments. The joke is over. [*Tries to go.*]
ORTENSIA. Stop a moment.
CAVALIER. Now what?
DEJANIRA. Give us a moment more\ of your delightful society.
CAVALIER. Thank you. No.
ORTENSIA. We won't eat you . . . [CAVALIER starts R.—
throws her off.]
DEJANIRA. [*Stops him.*] Or take away your reputation. [*Throws
her off.*]
ORTENSIA. [*D. R.*] We know you can't bear women.
CAVALIER. [*R.*] I am glad you do. I salute you.
ORTENSIA. [*R. C.*] We are not women who could bother you.
CAVALIER. Who are you then?
ORTENSIA. You tell him, Dejanira.
DEJANIRA. No, you tell him.
CAVALIER. Come, who are you?
ORTENSIA. Two comedians.
CAVALIER. Comedians! Well, well, I am prejudiced in favor of
your art.
ORTENSIA. Prejudiced? In favor?
CAVALIER. I know you act off the stage as well as on so I'm
ready for you.
DEJANIRA. Sir, I can't act off the stage . . .
CAVALIER. What is your name? Madame Sincerity?
DEJANIRA. My name is . . . [*Crosses U. L.*]
CAVALIER. And yours? All wool and a yard wide?
ORTENSIA. Dear Cavalier . . .
CAVALIER. You didn't get anything out of me, did you?
ORTENSIA. I am not . . .
CAVALIER. Now if I had been a fool. . . .
DEJANIRA. I'm not that kind.
CAVALIER. I can speak your patter.
ORTENSIA. [*Tries to take his arm.*] Oh, dear Cavalier . . .
CAVALIER. Take your hands off me.
ORTENSIA. Lout!
CAVALIER. Impertinent!
DEJANIRA. You speak so . . . to me.
ORTENSIA. To a woman like me?

CAVALIER. Your make-up's fine.

ORTENSIA. Jackass! [*She goes L.*]

CAVALIER. Your wig's a masterpiece.

DEJANIRA. Damn you. [*She goes L.*]

CAVALIER. That's the way to get rid of 'em. Did the silly fools think they could snare me? Now they'll go tell the Count.

. . . If they had been ladies . . . I would have had to leave.

. . . I like to put a woman where she belongs. [*Above chair L. of table.*] . . . But I've not been able to get the better of

Mirandolina! She has kept me in my place with so much courtesy that I almost . . . love her. I don't trust myself.

[*Crosses R.*] I ought to leave . . . Well, tomorrow . . .

No. . . I'll be a man. I'll leave at once. [*At R. of table.*]

[*SERVANT comes L.*]

SERVANT. Sir.

CAVALIER. What do you want?

SERVANT. The Marquis is in your room waiting to speak with you.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses to SERVANT, then R. C.*] What does that crazy man want? He won't get any more money out of me.

Let him wait. When he gets tired he will go. Tell the waiter

I want my bill at once.

SERVANT. Yes, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. Listen. Have my trunks ready in two hours.

SERVANT. You are leaving, sir?

CAVALIER. Yes. Bring my sword and hat here. And don't let the Marquis know.

SERVANT. But if he sees me packing?

CAVALIER. Say what you will. [*Crosses to back of table.*]

SERVANT. [*To himself.*] I hate to leave Mirandolina. [*Goes L.*]

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] I hate to go. I have never felt like this before. So much the worse for me if I stay. I had better go quickly. [*Crosses R. C.*] I am more bitter against women than ever. They do us harm even when they wish to do good. [*Crosses below table.*]

[*FABRIZIO comes.*]

FABRIZIO. Is it true you want your bill, sir?

CAVALIER. Yes. Have you brought it? [*Crosses R. C.*]

FABRIZIO. The mistress is making it out now.

CAVALIER. She makes out the bills?

FABRIZIO. Always. Even when her father was alive. She writes and figures better than most shopkeepers.

CAVALIER. What a woman! What a woman!

FABRIZIO. You are leaving sooner than you expected, Excellency?

CAVALIER. My affairs require it.

FABRIZIO. I beg you'll remember the waiter.

CAVALIER. Bring the bill. I know what to do.

FABRIZIO. You wish it here?

CAVALIER. Yes. I'm not going to my room just now.

FABRIZIO. You do well. The Marquis is in your room. The old bore presumes to make love to the mistress. But I'll see to that. He can twiddle his thumbs.

CAVALIER. [*Changing. Crosses to FABRIZIO.*] The bill.

FABRIZIO. At once. [*Goes L.*]

CAVALIER. Everyone is fascinated by Mirandolina. [*Below table.*] It's not surprising that I've caught fire, but I'll go away. I'll get the better of this unknown force. She's coming. [*R. Table.*] She's bringing the bill herself. What'll I do? This is the last assault. In two hours I'll be gone.

[*MIRANDOLINA enters L.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Sir?

CAVALIER. What is it, Mirandolina?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Standing back.*] You permit me?

CAVALIER. Come in.

MIRANDOLINA. You asked for your bill. I have brought it.

CAVALIER. [*R. table.*] Give it to me.

MIRANDOLINA. [*L. table.*] Here, sir. [*She dries her eyes with her apron and gives the bill.*]

CAVALIER. What is the matter? You are crying?

MIRANDOLINA. It is nothing. Smoke in my eyes.

CAVALIER. Smoke in your eyes? Oh! Ah. . . . How much is the bill? [*Reads bill.*] So little? But—I've been here three days— So little!—

MIRANDOLINA. That is your bill.

CAVALIER. The two special dishes you gave me this morning are not down here.

MIRANDOLINA. Pardon, Illustrious. What I give I do not put on the bill.

CAVALIER. You gave them to me?

MIRANDOLINA. Pardon the liberty . . . accept them as a token . . . [*Breaks off, covering her face, weeping.*]

CAVALIER. What is the matter with you?

MIRANDOLINA. I don't know whether it is the smoke or some trouble with my eyes.

CAVALIER. I hope it was not because of these excellent dishes you made for me—

MIRANDOLINA. If it were that I would suffer gladly. [*Restraining herself from crying.*]

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] Suppose I don't go away. [*To her.*] Cheer up . . . here. Take this . . . [*Handing her some money.*] Enjoy it for love of me. [*Confused.*] And pity me. [*Crosses R.* MIRANDOLINA falls fainting on a chair. *L. table.*] Mirandolina, Mirandolina. [*Crosses to her.*] She has fainted! How can I revive her? I'm not used to women. I haven't anything, anything. Who's outside? No one. I'll go. I'll get some water. Poor little one. [*Goes. L.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Sits up.*] Women have many wiles to conquer men, but the last resort is always a faint. It never fails. He's coming. He's coming. [*Lies as before.*]

[*Enter L. CAVALIER with jug of water.*]

CAVALIER. She hasn't come to yet. Can she be in love with me? So soon? But why not? I'm in love with her. Dear Mirandolina. I say "dear" to a woman? How beautiful she is. [*He sprinkles her and she moves.*] Courage, dear, courage. I am here. For the present I won't go away.

[*Servant comes with hat and sword L.*]

SERVANT. Your hat and sword, Illustrious.

CAVALIER. [*Angrily.*] Go away.

SERVANT. The trunks.

CAVALIER. Go away, damn you!

SERVANT. Mirandolina.

CAVALIER. Go, or I'll break your head. [*Threatens with pitcher.*

SERVANT goes *L.*] Not conscious yet. Her forehead is damp. Mirandolina, courage. Open your eyes. Speak to me, dear. [*R. of her.*]

[MARQUIS and COUNT enter.]

MARQUIS. Cavalier.

COUNT. My friend.

CAVALIER. Damn it all. [*Raving.*]

MARQUIS. Mirandolina!

MIRANDOLINA. [*Sits up.*] Ah!

MARQUIS. I brought her round.

COUNT. I congratulate you, Cavalier.

MARQUIS. Bravo! A man who cannot stand the sight of women.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses L.*] You are impertinent.

COUNT. So you've fallen.

CAVALIER. Go to the devil, both of you. [*He throws the jug on the floor towards the COUNT and MARQUIS. It breaks.*]

CAVALIER leaves furious L.]

COUNT. The Cavalier has gone mad. [*He leaves L.*]

MARQUIS. I will have satisfaction for this. [*He leaves L.*]

MIRANDOLINA. I have won. Now I must make my triumph public for the honor of my sex. [*She goes L.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE I

MIRANDOLINA'S room. Table and linen for ironing. Door open C.

MIRANDOLINA. I'm through amusing myself. Now I'll attend to my own affairs. And before this linen is entirely dry I must iron it. [*Calls.*] Fabrizio!

[FABRIZIO enters R.]

FABRIZIO. Madame?

MIRANDOLINA. Do me a favor. Bring me a hot iron.

FABRIZIO. [*R. C. Seriously, about to go.*] Yes, Madame.

MIRANDOLINA. I am sorry to bother you.

FABRIZIO. It is nothing, Madame. While I eat your bread I am obliged to serve you. [*About to go.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses behind table to him.*] Stop. Listen to me. You are not obliged to serve me in such ways. But I know you do it willingly for me. And I . . . That's enough. I will say no more.

FABRIZIO. I'd wear my fingers to the bone for you. But nothing I do is any use.

MIRANDOLINA. Why? Of no use?

FABRIZIO. You do not stoop to poor men. You are too taken up with the nobility.

MIRANDOLINA. [*C.*] Ah! The nobility! If I could tell you everything! But go! Go on! Get me the iron.

FABRIZIO But. . . . I have seen with my own eyes.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Behind table.*] Don't chatter so. Get me the iron.

FABRIZIO. I'm going. I'm going. I'll serve you, but not for long. [*Going.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Pretending to talk to herself but wanting to be*

heard.] With such men the fonder you are of them the worse they behave.

FABRIZIO. [*Tenderly, turning back.*] What did you say?

MIRANDOLINA. Will you bring me that iron?

FABRIZIO. Yes, I'll bring it. [*To himself.*] I don't know what to make of her. Now she lifts me up, now she throws me down. [*Goes R.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Poor fool. He has to wait on me in spite of himself. It makes me laugh to twist men around my fingers. And that dear Cavalier who was such an enemy of women. Now he eats out of my hand.

[*SERVANT enters R.*]

SERVANT. Mistress Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. What is it, friend?

SERVANT. My master's compliments. He sends to ask how you are.

MIRANDOLINA. Tell him I'm very well indeed.

[*SERVANT gives her a little gold bottle.*]

SERVANT. [*C.*] He says you must drink a little of this Spirits of Melissa, it will do you good.

MIRANDOLINA. Is this bottle gold?

SERVANT. Yes, mistress.

MIRANDOLINA. Why didn't he give it to me when I had that horrible fainting spell?

SERVANT. He didn't have it then.

MIRANDOLINA. How does he happen to have it now?

SERVANT. Listen. In confidence. He sent me to call a goldsmith, bought this, paid ten sequins for it, and then sent me to the chemist's to buy the spirits.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha!

SERVANT. Why do you laugh?

MIRANDOLINA. Because he sends the medicine after I am cured of the illness.

SERVANT. It will be good for another time.

MIRANDOLINA. I will drink a little as a preventive. [*Drinks.*] Here. Thank him. [*Tries to give back bottle.*]

SERVANT. Oh! That's yours.

MIRANDOLINA. Mine?

SERVANT. My master bought it on purpose.

MIRANDOLINA. On purpose for me?

SERVANT. Yes. On purpose for you. But don't tell.

MIRANDOLINA. Take it back and say I thank him.

SERVANT. Oh! Please!

MIRANDOLINA. I tell you take it back. I don't want it.

SERVANT. But do you want . . .

MIRANDOLINA. Don't chatter. Do what I tell you. Here.

SERVANT. Yes, mistress. I'll take it. [*To himself.*] What a woman. To refuse a gift worth ten sequins. I've never seen anything like it. [*Goes C.*]

MIRANDOLINA. He's mine. But I don't want his presents. Let him confess the power of women and not be able to say they are—out for gain.

[*FABRIZIO comes R. Stops with iron in hand at table.*]

FABRIZIO. Here's the iron.

MIRANDOLINA. Is it good and hot?

FABRIZIO. So hot I burnt myself.

MIRANDOLINA. Anything new?

FABRIZIO. The Cavalier sends you presents. His servant told me.

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, a little gold bottle which I sent back again.

FABRIZIO. [*R. of MIRANDOLINA.*] You sent it back?

MIRANDOLINA. Ask his servant if you don't believe me.

FABRIZIO. Why did you send it back?

MIRANDOLINA. Because, Fabrizio. . . . Don't ask. . . . Come . . . Let's talk of something else.

FABRIZIO. Mirandolina, have pity on me. [*Puts arms around her waist.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Go on now. Let me iron.

FABRIZIO. I'm not hindering you.

MIRANDOLINA. Heat another iron. When it's hot bring it to me.

FABRIZIO. Yes. [*Crosses R.*] I'm going. Believe me . . . When I speak to you . . .

MIRANDOLINA. Don't talk any more. You annoy me.

FABRIZIO. I'll be dumb. [*To himself.*] She's a queer one, but how I love her. [*Goes R.*]

CAVALIER. [*At back, to himself.*] Here she is. I didn't want to come but the devil himself dragged me.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Sees him out of corner of her eye. Irons.*]

Here he is. Here he is.

CAVALIER. [*C.*] Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. Oh! your humble servant.

CAVALIER. How are you now, Mirandolina?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Irons without looking at him.*] Very well indeed, at your service.

CAVALIER. Why did you refuse the little bottle I sent you?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Ironing.*] Whatever could I do with it?

CAVALIER. Use it when necessary.

MIRANDOLINA. Heaven be praised I'm not subject to fainting fits. What happened today never happened before.

CAVALIER. I hope I was not the cause, Mirandolina?

MIRANDOLINA. You were the cause.

CAVALIER. [*With passion.*] I? Really?

MIRANDOLINA. [*Angrily throws water at him.*] You made me drink that horrid Burgundy that made me ill.

CAVALIER. [*Mortified.*] Is it possible?

MIRANDOLINA. Quite possible. I will never come to your room again.

CAVALIER. [*Lovingly.*] Don't say that dear, please.

MIRANDOLINA. This iron is getting cold. Eh, Fabrizio. If the iron is hot bring it to me.

CAVALIER. Do me a favor. Take this little bottle.

MIRANDOLINA. [*With disdain.*] Indeed, Cavalier, I do not take presents.

CAVALIER. You took them from Count Albafiorita.

MIRANDOLINA. I was obliged to not to offend him.

CAVALIER. You want to offend me?

MIRANDOLINA. Does it matter to you if a woman offend you, when you can't stand the sight of one?

CAVALIER. Ah, Mirandolina, I can't say that now.

MIRANDOLINA. Cavalier, what time is the new moon?

CAVALIER. It is not the moon but your beauty and charm that . . .

MIRANDOLINA. [*Laughs.*] Ha, ha, ha!

CAVALIER. Why do you laugh?

MIRANDOLINA. You don't wish me to laugh when you are making fun of me?

CAVALIER. Flirt. I make fun of you? Here. Take the bottle.
[*Puts it on table.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Thanks, thanks.

CAVALIER. Take it or you will make me angry.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Calling loudly with exaggeration.*] Fabrizio!
Fabrizio!

CAVALIER. [*Changed.*] Will you take it or won't you take it?

MIRANDOLINA. Cross patch. [*Takes bottle and tosses it into clothes basket.*]

CAVALIER. You toss it away like that?

MIRANDOLINA. [*As before.*] Fabrizio!

[FABRIZIO *enters R.*]

FABRIZIO. I am here. [*Becomes jealous when he sees CAVALIER.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Takes iron.*] Is it good and hot?

FABRIZIO. [*R. table. Standing still.*] Yes, Madame.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Tenderly.*] What's the matter? You seem troubled.

FABRIZIO. Nothing, Madame, nothing.

MIRANDOLINA. [*As before.*] Are you ill?

FABRIZIO. Give me the other iron if you want me to put it on the fire.

MIRANDOLINA. [*As before.*] Really, I'm afraid you are ill.

CAVALIER. [*Behind table.*] Give him the iron so he can go.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To CAVALIER.*] I am fond of him, you know.
He is my trusted servant.

CAVALIER. [*To himself, raving. Crosses U. L.*] I can't bear any more.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Gives iron to FABRIZIO.*] Here, dear. Make it hot.

FABRIZIO. [*Tenderly.*] Mistress. . . .

MIRANDOLINA. [*Driving him away.*] Come, come quickly.

FABRIZIO. [*To himself.*] What a life! I can't stand it. [*Goes R.*]

CAVALIER. [*R. C.*] Very charming, Madame, to your servants.

MIRANDOLINA. What are you suggesting?

CAVALIER. One can see you are fascinated with him.

MIRANDOLINA. I? I, fascinated by a waiter. You pay me a pretty compliment, sir. I have not such bad taste.

CAVALIER. You deserve the love of a king.

MIRANDOLINA. King of hearts? Or king of diamonds?

CAVALIER. Let us talk seriously, Mirandolina, without joking.

MIRANDOLINA. Talk then, and I will listen.

CAVALIER. Can't you stop ironing a little while?

MIRANDOLINA. Pardon. I must finish this linen for tomorrow.

CAVALIER. The linen is more important then than I am?

MIRANDOLINA. Certainly.

CAVALIER. And you even say so.

MIRANDOLINA. Of course. I need the linen, but you. . . .

CAVALIER. You may use me as you wish.

MIRANDOLINA. This from you who can't abide women.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses R.*] Don't torment me any more. You are revenged enough. I respect you, and respect all women of your sort, if there are any. I respect you. . . . I love you. . . . I beg your pity . . . [*Crosses to her.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, sir. We women will say to you. . . . [*As she irons she lets a cuff fall. He picks it up and gives it to her.*]

CAVALIER. Believe me. . . .

MIRANDOLINA. Don't trouble.

CAVALIER. You deserve to be waited on.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Laughing loudly.*] Ha . . . ha . . . ha.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses R. C.*] Laughing again?

MIRANDOLINA. You are always making fun of me.

CAVALIER. Mirandolina, I can't stand any more. [*U. R.*]

MIRANDOLINA. You feel ill?

CAVALIER. Yes. I feel faint. [*D. C.*]

MIRANDOLINA. [*Disdainfully, tossing him the little bottle.*] Take some Spirits of Melissa.

CAVALIER. Don't be so sharp with me. Believe me, I love you. I swear it. [*He tries to take her hand and she scorches him with the iron.*] Ouch.

MIRANDOLINA. Pardon me. I did not do it on purpose.

CAVALIER. Patience. That was nothing. You have given me a greater hurt.

MIRANDOLINA. Where, sir?

CAVALIER. In my heart.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Laughing, calls.*] Fabrizio!

CAVALIER. For God's sake don't call that man.

MIRANDOLINA. But I need another iron.

CAVALIER. Wait.—No. I'll call my servant.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Calling.*] Fabrizio!

CAVALIER. I swear to heaven if that man comes I'll break his head.

MIRANDOLINA. That's pretty. I can't even have my own servant.

CAVALIER. Call someone else. I can't bear the sight of that man.

MIRANDOLINA. It seems to me you go a little too far, Sir Cavalier. [*She moves a little from the table with the iron in her hand.*]

CAVALIER. Have pity on me. I'm beside myself.

MIRANDOLINA. I will go in the kitchen. And you will feel better.

CAVALIER. No, dear. Stay here.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Walking.*] This is a strange state of affairs.

CAVALIER. Have pity on me. [*Following her.*]

MIRANDOLINA. I may not call whom I will.

CAVALIER. [*Following.*] I confess I'm jealous of him.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses L. C.*] He follows me like a little puppy dog.

CAVALIER. This is the first time I have been in love.

MIRANDOLINA. No one has ever dictated to me.

CAVALIER. I'm not trying to dictate to you. I beg you. . . .

MIRANDOLINA. [*Turns, her manner changed.*] What do you want of me?

CAVALIER. Love. Compassion. Pity.

MIRANDOLINA. A man who this morning could not bear the sight of a woman this afternoon asks love and pity. It can't be. It can't be. [*To herself as she goes R.*] Woman hater? Worm! Toad! Insect!

CAVALIER. Curse the minute I began to admire that woman. I am caught in the net and there is no help.

[*MARQUIS enters C.*]

MARQUIS. Cavalier, you insulted me.

CAVALIER. I had no intention . . . It was an accident.

MARQUIS. It was deliberate.

CAVALIER. The jug didn't touch you.

MARQUIS. A drop of water spotted my coat.

CAVALIER. Forget it, I beg you.

MARQUIS. It was an impertinence.

CAVALIER. I didn't do it on purpose. For the third time I ask you to let it pass.

MARQUIS. I want satisfaction.

CAVALIER. If you won't overlook it, if you want satisfaction, I'll give it to you.

MARQUIS. [*Changing.*] It's my coat. I fear the spot won't come out. That is what annoys me.

CAVALIER. [*U. C. Disdainfully.*] When a Cavalier asks pardon, what more can you wish?

MARQUIS. [*L. of table.*] If it was not intentional, let it go.

CAVALIER. I repeat, I am ready to give you whatever satisfaction . . .

MARQUIS. Oh, come . . . let us talk of something else.

CAVALIER. [*D. R.*] What a Cavalier!

MARQUIS. Are you trying to rouse my anger again?

CAVALIER. Well, you've come at a good moment.

MARQUIS. I pity you. I know what the trouble is.

CAVALIER. I don't pry into your affairs.

MARQUIS. Enemy of women! You have fallen, eh?

CAVALIER. I? How?

MARQUIS. You are in love, at last.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses to MARQUIS.*] Devil take you.

MARQUIS. Why try to hide it?

CAVALIER. Let me alone or I swear to Heaven I'll make you regret it. [*Exit R.*]

MARQUIS. He is in love and is ashamed of it. He doesn't want anybody to know. Hesitates to call himself my rival. . . . I am worried about this spot. If I only knew how to get it out. Women usually have something for spots. [*Looks on table and in basket above table.*] What a pretty little bottle. Gold, I wonder? If it were gold she wouldn't leave it here. Must be imitation. If it holds Javelle water it would take out this spot. [*Opens, smells, tastes.*] Spirits of Melissa. Well, it might be good. I'll try it. [*Sits.*]

[*DEJANIRA comes in C.*]

DEJANIRA. Alone, Marquis? Aren't you ever coming to see us?

MARQUIS. [*Above table.*] I was just coming, Countess.

DEJANIRA. What were you doing?

MARQUIS. I was just trying to get out this little spot.

DEJANIRA. What with, sir?

MARQUIS. Spirits of Melissa.

DEJANIRA. Why that won't help. It will make it worse.

MARQUIS. Then what can I use?

DEJANIRA. I have a secret.

MARQUIS. You would do me a favor if you would tell me.

DEJANIRA. Gladly. For a little piece of silver I will clean it so that you could never tell where it was.

MARQUIS. A piece of silver?

DEJANIRA. Does it seem too expensive, sir?

MARQUIS. Better try the Spirits of Melissa.

DEJANIRA. Permit me. Is it good?

MARQUIS. Excellent. Taste it.

DEJANIRA. [*Tasting.*] Oh. I can make better.

MARQUIS. You know how?

DEJANIRA. That is one of my accomplishments.

MARQUIS. Bravo. That pleases me.

DEJANIRA. Is this bottle gold?

MARQUIS. Would you like it? It is gold, of course. [*To himself.*] She doesn't know gold from pinchbeck.

DEJANIRA. Is it yours, Marquis?

MARQUIS. It is yours if you desire it.

DEJANIRA. Thanks. You are kind. [*Takes bottle and puts it away.*]

MARQUIS. You are . . . joking?

DEJANIRA. Why! Didn't you offer it to me?

MARQUIS. It is not worthy of you. It's a trifle. I'll give you a better one if you would like it.

DEJANIRA. [*C.*] Why, how generous! Too generous. Thank you, Marquis.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses C.*] Really . . . in confidence. . . . It is not gold. Only imitation.

DEJANIRA. So much the better. I like it better than gold. Anything from you becomes precious.

MARQUIS. [*R. table.*] Well . . . keep it of course, if you wish. [*Aside.*] Oh well . . . I must pay Mirandolina for it. I wonder what it's worth? Very little, I think. . . .

DEJANIRA. The Marquis is an excellent cavalier.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to her.*] I am ashamed to present you with such a trifle. I wish the little bottle were gold.

DEJANIRA. [*Takes bottle out and looks at it.*] Really, it looks exactly like it. Anyone would be deceived.

MARQUIS. True. Anyone not accustomed to gold. I recognize it instantly.

DEJANIRA. From the weight, too, it seems gold.

MARQUIS. And yet it's not.

DEJANIRA. [*U.C.*] I must show it to my friend.

MARQUIS. Listen, Madame Countess, don't show it to Mirandolina. She is a chatterbox. I don't know if you understand me.

DEJANIRA. I understand. I will show it to Ortensia only.

MARQUIS. To the Baroness?

DEJANIRA. Yes, yes. To the Baroness. [*Goes off laughing.*]

MARQUIS. I believe she is laughing because with her pretty guile she has taken the little bottle from me. A serious matter if it were gold. This I can adjust for a small sum. If Mirandolina wants her bottle, I will pay her for it . . . when I can.

[*CAVALIER'S servant comes in R.*]

SERVANT. [*Looking on table.*] Where the deuce is that bottle?

MARQUIS. What are you looking for, my good fellow?

SERVANT. A little bottle of Spirits of Melissa. Mistress Mirandolina wants it. She says she left it here, but I can't find it.

MARQUIS. [*L.*] Was it a little bottle of pinchbeck?

SERVANT. No sir. Gold.

MARQUIS. Gold!

SERVANT. [*R. of table. Looking.*] Yes, gold. I saw ten sequins paid for it.

MARQUIS. [*Sits. To himself.*] Poor me. [*To the SERVANT.*] Why did she leave a gold bottle lying about?

SERVANT. She must have forgotten where she left it. I can't find it here.

MARQUIS. It seems impossible that it could be gold.

SERVANT. It was. Has your Excellency perhaps seen it?

MARQUIS. I? No. I've seen nothing.

SERVANT. Well, I'll tell her I can't find it. [*Goes R.*]

MARQUIS. Poor Marquis of Forlipopoli. A gold bottle worth ten sequins. What am I to do? If I get it back from the

Countess I'll be ridiculous in her eyes. If Mirandolina finds I've had it—my dignity is in danger. I am a Cavalier. I must pay. But . . . I have no money. [*The COUNT comes C.*]

COUNT. What do you think of the news?

MARQUIS. What news?

COUNT. [*Crosses to MARQUIS.*] That enemy of women is in love with Mirandolina.

MARQUIS. That's good. He feels her charm in spite of himself. He sees that I am not fascinated by one who is unworthy. He'll get paid now for his impertinence.

COUNT. [*Below table.*] But if Mirandolina returns his feelings?

MARQUIS. That could never be. She would not do me such a wrong. She knows what I have done for her.

COUNT. [*Walks R. and L.*] I have done considerably more than you. But it's all wasted. Mirandolina encourages the Cavalier of Ripafratta. She shows him attentions she has never shown you or me. The more one does for women the less they deserve it. They laugh at those who adore them and run after those who scorn them.

MARQUIS. If that were true . . . but it can't be true.

COUNT. [*Sits on table.*] Why not?

MARQUIS. To put the Cavalier above me?

COUNT. Didn't you see her sitting at the Cavalier's table? Has she ever shown us similar confidence? For him special linen. Served at dinner before everyone else. Dishes prepared for him with her own hands. The servants are all talking. Fabrizio fumes with rage. Then that faint. Whether real or not . . . wasn't it a manifest sign of love?

MARQUIS. What! She makes a special ragout for him! And gives me only brisket and soup with nothing in it but broken rice. Yes. [*Crosses R.*] It's true. It's an insult to my rank and station.

COUNT. [*Rises.*] And I who spent so much on her?—

MARQUIS. And I who constantly gave her presents. I even gave her a drink of my precious Cypress wine. [*C.*] The Cavalier can't have done for her a fraction of what we have done.

COUNT. Don't doubt but he too has given her presents.

MARQUIS. Yes? What has he given her?

COUNT. A little bottle of gold containing Spirits of Melissa.

MARQUIS. [*To himself, crosses R.*] Ah, me. [*To the COUNT, crosses C.*] How do you know?

COUNT. His servant told mine.

MARQUIS. [*To himself, crosses R.*] Worse and worse. I'm embroiled now with the Cavalier.

COUNT. I see that Mirandolina is ungrateful. I want to give her up entirely. I want to leave this wretched inn immediately.

MARQUIS. [*R. C.*] You are right to leave.

COUNT. [*L. C.*] You, a cavalier of reputation, ought to leave with me.

MARQUIS. But . . . where could I go?

COUNT. I will find you a place. Leave it to me.

MARQUIS. [*C.*] The place will be . . . for example . . .

COUNT. [*Crosses to MARQUIS.*] We'll go to the house of a countryman of mine. It won't cost you anything.

MARQUIS. Well, you are so truly my friend, I cannot say no to you. [*They shake hands.*]

COUNT. Let us both go and be revenged on this ungrateful woman.

MARQUIS. Yes. Let us go. [*To himself, crosses R.*] But that bottle. . . . I am a cavalier. And I cannot do wrong.

COUNT. Don't change your mind. Do me this favor. Then ask of me anything that I can do for you.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to COUNT.*] I'll tell you in confidence. . . . No one must know . . . My overseer sometimes is slow in sending remittances.

COUNT. You need to pay something perhaps?

MARQUIS. Yes, ten sequins.

COUNT. Ten sequins? It must be long since you have paid?

MARQUIS. That's the way of it. I owe ten sequins. I can't leave here without paying. . . . If you could do me the favor . . .

COUNT [*Taking out purse.*] Willingly. Here's your ten—

MARQUIS. Wait. Now I remember it's eleven [*To himself.*] I want to give the Cavalier his sequin. . . .

COUNT. Ten or eleven. It's the same to me. Here you are. [*Gives money.*]

MARQUIS. I will return it very soon.

COUNT. Keep it as long as you wish. I have plenty. To revenge myself on her I would spend thousands.

MARQUIS. Yes, she is truly ungrateful. I have spent so much on her and she treats me like this. [*Crosses L.*]

COUNT. I would like to ruin her inn. I made those comedians leave too.

MARQUIS. What comedians?

COUNT. The ones who were here. Ortensia and Dejanira.

MARQUIS. What? They were not ladies?

COUNT. [*R. C.*] No. That joke is over.

MARQUIS. [*To himself.*] My little bottle. [*To COUNT.*] Where are they lodged now?

COUNT. In a house near the theatre.

MARQUIS. [*To himself.*] I'll go and get it. [*Goes C.*]

COUNT. I'll revenge myself upon her in this way. I'll make that double-faced Cavalier pay in another way.

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Room with 3 doors. Same as Act I, Scene I.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Enter L.*] Now I am in an ugly fix. I hope the Cavalier won't follow me here. I'll close that door. [*Closes door through which she came.*] I almost regret all this. . . . Though it has been fun to make that superb woman hater run after me. . . . But now he has turned into such a devil, curse him, that both my life and reputation may be in danger. I must decide what to do. [*Crosses R.*] There's no one but that good Fabrizio, I can depend on in case of need. I'll promise to marry him. Promise? He's tired of promises. It might be well if I actually married him. . . . I'd protect my interests and reputation and not lose my liberty.

CAVALIER. [*From outside L.*] Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. My friend is here.

CAVALIER. Open the door, Mirandolina.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] Open the door? I'm not such a fool. [*Calls.*] What do you want, Sir Cavalier?

CAVALIER. Open the door.

MIRANDOLINA. Do me the favor of waiting in your room, I will be there at once.

CAVALIER. Why won't you let me in?

MIRANDOLINA. Strangers are coming. Do me this favor. I will come soon.

CAVALIER. Very well. If you don't come the worse for you.

MIRANDOLINA. "Worse for you if you don't come!" Worse for me if I do! [*Looks through keyhole.*] He's gone. He'll expect me in his room, but let him expect! [*Goes to another door R. and calls.*] Fabrizio! It would be pretty if Fabrizio should want to revenge himself and would not. . . . Oh! No danger. I have certain little wiles that would make him fall if he were made of steel. [*Goes to another door C. and calls.*] Fabrizio!

[*FABRIZIO comes C.*]

FABRIZIO. Did you call?

MIRANDOLINA. [*L. of FABRIZIO.*] Come here, I want to ask your advice.

FABRIZIO. I'm here.

MIRANDOLINA. I must tell you that the Cavalier of Ripafratta is in love with me.

FABRIZIO. I've known that all along.

MIRANDOLINA. You've known it? I didn't even suspect it.

FABRIZIO. Poor innocent. You didn't? Didn't you see the faces he made when you were ironing? Didn't you notice his jealousy of me?

MIRANDOLINA. My mind is on my business. I take things as they come. Well . . . now. . . . Fabrizio he has spoken to me in a way that. . . .

FABRIZIO. You see? That's because you are a young woman alone. If you were married it wouldn't be so.

MIRANDOLINA. I know you're talking sense. I have thought of getting married.

FABRIZIO. Remember your father.

MIRANDOLINA. Yes. . . . I do remember.

[*CAVALIER knocks L.*]

FABRIZIO. Who's that knocking?

CAVALIER. [*Knocks.*] Open this door.

MIRANDOLINA. It's the Cavalier.

FABRIZIO. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] I'll open. [*Goes towards door.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Wait till I've gone.

FABRIZIO. What are you afraid of?

MIRANDOLINA. I don't know, Fabrizio. Perhaps my reputation.

FABRIZIO. Don't be afraid. I'll defend you.

[MIRANDOLINA goes C.]

CAVALIER. Open this door, or I swear to heaven. . . .

FABRIZIO. What do you wish, sir? Why all this noise? In a decent house one doesn't act so.

CAVALIER. [*Trying to force the door.*] Open . . .

FABRIZIO. Damn it. I don't want to get involved in this. Men!

Who's out there? Isn't there anybody?

[MARQUIS and COUNT from the door R.]

COUNT. [*On threshold.*] What's the matter?

MARQUIS. What's all the noise?

FABRIZIO. [*Softly.*] Gentlemen, I beg of you. . . . The Cavalier of Ripafratta is trying to force open that door.

CAVALIER. Open. Or I'll break it down.

MARQUIS. [*To COUNT.*] Has he gone mad? Let's go away.

COUNT. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Open it for him. As it happens I want to speak to him.

FABRIZIO. Yes, Illustrious, but I beg of you—

COUNT. Don't worry. We are here.

[FABRIZIO opens door and CAVALIER comes in L.]

CAVALIER. I swear to heaven. . . . Where is she?

FABRIZIO. Who are you looking for, sir?

CAVALIER. Mirandolina. Where is she?

FABRIZIO. That I do not know.

MARQUIS. [*Sits back of table. To himself.*] It's nothing! It has to do with Mirandolina.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses R.*] The devil! I'll find her. [*Walks about room and notices COUNT and MARQUIS.*]

COUNT. [*To CAVALIER.*] What's the trouble?

MARQUIS. [*Sits.*] Yes, friend, what's the trouble?

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] I wouldn't have them see how things are for all the gold in the world.

FABRIZIO. What do you wish, sir, with the Mistress?

CAVALIER. I don't have to account to you. When I order I expect service. By heaven I'll deal with her direct.

FABRIZIO. You pay for service, yes. But you have no right . . . you'll pardon me . . . you have no right to ask an honest woman. . . .

CAVALIER. [*Crosses L.*] What are you talking about? What do you know? You keep out of my affairs. I know what I demanded of her.

FABRIZIO. You ordered her to come to your room.

CAVALIER. Get away or I'll break your head.

FABRIZIO. [*Crosses U. C.*] Illustrious . . .

MARQUIS. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Keep quiet.

COUNT. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Go away.

CAVALIER. [*To FABRIZIO.*] Get out of here, I say.

FABRIZIO. [*Getting excited.*] I say, sir . . .

MARQUIS AND COUNT. Go away . . . go away.

FABRIZIO. Heavens! I certainly would like to take a hand in this.

[*COUNT and MARQUIS chase him away.*]

CAVALIER. [*U. and D. L.*] It's an outrage to keep me waiting in that room.

MARQUIS. [*Softly to COUNT.*] What the deuce is the matter with him?

COUNT. Can't you see? He's in love with Mirandolina.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] While she was carrying on here with Fabrizio. Talking about marriage.

COUNT. [*C. To himself.*] Now is my time for revenge. [*To CAVALIER.*] People who live in glass houses ought not to throw stones.

CAVALIER. What do you mean by that?

COUNT. I know why you are in such a rage.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses R. Changed. To MARQUIS.*] Do you know what he is talking about?

MARQUIS. Friend, I know nothing.

COUNT. I'm talking of you who pretend to hate women, when all the time you were making love to Mirandolina.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses R. to MARQUIS. To MARQUIS.*] I . . .

MARQUIS. I didn't speak.

COUNT. Turn around and answer me. Perhaps you are ashamed of your behaviour.

CAVALIER. I am ashamed to listen to you longer without saying you lie.

COUNT. You give me the lie!

MARQUIS. [*To himself.*] Things are getting bad.

CAVALIER. What's your foundation for saying . . . [*To MARQUIS angrily.*] The Count doesn't know what he is talking about.

MARQUIS. I do not wish to take part in this.

COUNT. You are a liar.

MARQUIS. I am going. [*Tries to leave. CAVALIER holds him by force.*]

CAVALIER. Stay here.

COUNT. And you will render me an account. . . .

CAVALIER. Yes, I will. [*To MARQUIS.*] Give me your sword.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses between them.*] Come now, calm yourselves.

What does it matter if the Cavalier loves Mirandolina?

CAVALIER. I love her? Who says that lies.

COUNT. I say it. And I maintain it.

CAVALIER. [*To MARQUIS.*] Give me that sword.

MARQUIS. No, I say.

COUNT. I am not afraid of you.

CAVALIER. I swear to heaven. [*He takes the sword from MARQUIS which comes off with the scabbard.*]

MARQUIS. [*To CAVALIER.*] Don't insult me.

CAVALIER. [*To MARQUIS.*] I'll give you satisfaction as well.

MARQUIS. Oh come. You are too excitable. [*Sadly to himself.*]

I am sorry . . .

COUNT. I want satisfaction. [*Puts himself on guard.*]

CAVALIER. I'll give it to you. [*Tries to take sword from scabbard and can't.*]

MARQUIS. That sword isn't used to you.

CAVALIER. [*Trying to force it out.*] Damn it.

MARQUIS. Don't hurt it.

COUNT. I have no more patience.

CAVALIER. Here it comes. [*Sword comes out. It is only half a blade.*] What's this?

MARQUIS. You have broken my sword.

CAVALIER. Where is the other piece? It's not in the scabbard.

MARQUIS. That's so. I broke it at my last duel. I had forgotten.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses L. to COUNT.*] Let me get a sword.

COUNT. No, you won't escape me so. . . .

CAVALIER. [*Crosses U. L.*] Who wants to? I'll fight you with this piece of a blade.

MARQUIS. It's a Spanish blade. It does not know fear.

COUNT. Don't bluster so.

CAVALIER. Yes, with this piece of a blade. [*Going towards COUNT.*]

COUNT. [*On defensive.*] Back.

[*MIRANDOLINA and FABRIZIO come in C.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Gentlemen!

FABRIZIO. Masters.

COUNT. [*Seeing MIRANDOLINA.*] Curse it.

MIRANDOLINA. Swords?

MARQUIS. You see? On your account.

MIRANDOLINA. On my account?

COUNT. The Cavalier's in love with you . . .

CAVALIER. I'm not in love. You lie.

MIRANDOLINA. The Cavalier in love with me. Oh, no, Count.

You are mistaken. I can assure you of that.

COUNT. Since you agree . . .

MIRANDOLINA. The Cavalier in love with me? He denies it in my presence. He mortifies and abases me. He makes me realize his strength and my weakness. I confess the truth. If I had made him love me, I would have been triumphant. One can't hope to make such a man fall in love. One who disdains women. Gentlemen, I am a sincere and simple woman. When I speak I speak the truth. I cannot hide anything. I tried to make the Cavalier love me, but I did not succeed. [*To the CAVALIER.*] It's so, sir? I tried and tried but without success.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] I cannot speak.

COUNT. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] You see? He's confused.

MARQUIS. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] He has not the courage to say no.

CAVALIER. [*To MARQUIS angrily.*] You don't know what you are talking about.

MARQUIS. [*To CAVALIER sweetly.*] You are always finding fault with me.

MIRANDOLINA. No, the Cavalier isn't in love. He understands all about that Art. He does not believe in women. He does not trust their tears. He laughs at their fainting fits.

CAVALIER. Are the tears of women feigned and their fainting fits lies?

MIRANDOLINA. What, don't you know that or do you pretend not to know?

CAVALIER. By heaven, such duplicity invites a sword. [*Turns on her.*]

MIRANDOLINA. Sir Cavalier, don't excite yourself, or these gentlemen will say you really are in love.

CAVALIER. No. I am not.

MIRANDOLINA. No, no. He is not in love. I say so and am ready to prove it.

CAVALIER. [*To himself.*] I can't endure any more. [*To COUNT.*] Another time you will find me provided with a sword. [*Throws down half blade, starts off L.*]

MARQUIS. [*Picking it up.*] The hilt is worth something.

MIRANDOLINA. Wait, Cavalier. This affects your reputation.

You must prove to these gentlemen that you are not in love.

CAVALIER. It is not necessary.

MIRANDOLINA. Indeed, yes, sir, wait a moment. Gentlemen, the surest sign of love is jealousy. If a man does not feel it he certainly is not in love. If the Cavalier loved me he could not allow me to belong to anyone else. But you will see. He does not care.

CAVALIER. Who is the man?

MIRANDOLINA. The man for whom my father destined me.

FABRIZIO. Meaning me, perhaps?

MIRANDOLINA. Yes, dear Fabrizio. I give you my hand before these gentlemen.

CAVALIER. That man. I cannot bear it.

COUNT. [*To himself.*] If she marries Fabrizio she does not love the Cavalier. [*To MIRANDOLINA.*] Yes, marry him. I promise you sixty sequins.

MARQUIS. Mirandolina, an egg today is better than a hen tomorrow. Marry now and I will give you at once ten sequins.

MIRANDOLINA. Thanks, gentlemen, I have no need of a dot. I am a poor woman—I am without charm. I could not aspire to

gentlemen of rank, but Fabrizio loves me and here in your presence I give him my hand.

CAVALIER. [*Crosses to MIRANDOLINA.*] Marry whom you please. You have abased me and you are triumphant. It would serve you right if I tore out your heart and trampled it under foot. I curse your charms, your tears, your pretences. You have taught me to my cost that it is not enough to despise women. One must flee from them. [*Goes L.*]

COUNT. Say now he is not in love.

MARQUIS. If he gives me the lie again, as a cavalier I'll defy him.

MIRANDOLINA. [*Crosses L.*] Be quiet. He has gone. If that is the end of the affair I am fortunate. I succeeded in making the poor fellow love me but I ran an ugly risk. I don't want to think of it any more. Fabrizio, dear, give me your hand.

FABRIZIO. [*R. C.*] Not so fast, Madame. You play at love in this way and then think that I want to marry you?

MIRANDOLINA. Silly one. It was all a joke. I was only a girl with no one to guide me. When I am married I'll behave myself.

COUNT. If he does not love you, I do, Mirandolina.

MARQUIS. And I. I offer my protection.

MIRANDOLINA. Gentlemen, till now I have amused myself.

Now . . . here is the man I am to marry.

FABRIZIO. Not so fast.

MIRANDOLINA. What do you mean? Come. Give me your hand.

FABRIZIO. We will make the contract first.

MIRANDOLINA. Contract! The contract is this. Give me your hand or go back to your home.

FABRIZIO. I will give you my hand. But then . . .

MIRANDOLINA. But then. . . . Don't doubt me. I love you.

FABRIZIO. [*Giving her his hand.*] Here, dear. I can't resist you.

MIRANDOLINA. [*To herself.*] That's done.

COUNT. Mirandolina, you are a wonderful woman.

MARQUIS. Your charm . . .

MIRANDOLINA. If it is true that you feel kindly towards me I ask a last favor.

COUNT. Granted.

MARQUIS. Speak.

FABRIZIO. [*To himself.*] Now what will she ask.

MIRANDOLINA. As a last favor I beg you to find another place to stay.

FABRIZIO. [*To himself.*] Now I see she loves me.

COUNT. [*Crosses R. C.*] I'll go, but wherever I am be sure of my esteem.

MARQUIS. [*Crosses to her.*] Did you lose a little gold bottle?

MIRANDOLINA. Yes.

MARQUIS. Here it is. I found it and now return it. I too will go to please you, but wherever I am, be sure of my protection.

MIRANDOLINA. These assurances are dear to me. In return, may I suggest that you gentlemen profit by this experience. If you are tempted again to forget your station, remember Mirandolina.

CURTAIN

NOTES ON LA LOCANDIERA

One often finds this type of play produced in a stilted and unreal manner, which people sometimes like to call stylization. Personally I feel that the charm of this old play lies particularly in its humanity. It uses the simpler and more obvious foibles of human beings, and playing on them creates a series of amusing situations. The great essentials are warmth and a rollicking humor. It takes place in a country filled with sunshine, under a bright blue sky. There is no prohibition, and the food is good; it is a play of physical well-being. There should be great rapidity of speech combined with a great amount of gesture. Use of these Latin qualities helps to bridge the gap between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon. The play itself is so simple that scarcely any notes are required. The best general advice for producing this play is to catch the spirit of it and allow spontaneous ideas full play. The most important thing is to have a good time yourselves and then maybe the audience will too. The play is helped by the use of music as overture and at the very short scene waits. 18th Century Italian music can be used and should be played on strings.

Goldoni, as many of the old masters, gave no stage directions whatsoever, but merely presented the actor, who in those days was a creative artist, with a frame in which the actor could play out his ideas. One must remember that this was the first play breaking with the *commedia dell' arte* tradition, and naturally a great deal of the *commedia dell' arte* manner and freedom for the actor remains.

1. The first scene sets the key of the play. It should be a thoroughly Latin argument, which sounds almost like a quarrel. Very fast tempo and steady crescendo up to Cavalier's entrance when they nearly scream at each other.

2. The Marquis is a type, his basic characteristics true. He would not know how to be generous even if he had money. The most negative person in the play, from Goldoni's point of view, is the Count. And the only thing you can do with him is to play him with charm and make him attractive looking.
3. Fabrizio is a typical Italian servant. His and Mirandolina's apparent cupidity is really only the childlike acquisitiveness of the Latin race. One can forgive them these traits because of their great charm and naïveté.
4. The Cavalier is in complete contrast to the other two men. He is rather severely dressed, while they are embroidered and laced. He has a rather martial manner, a brusque man though terrified of women and shy in their presence. He is ashamed of this and so calls himself "a woman-hater."
5. Mirandolina is all of Italy, 100% Italian femininity. If she were not so charming, and were one to start analyzing her, one might be tempted to think of her as a scheming, insincere, selfish young woman. She plays with people and she plays up to people, and amuses herself by making them do the things she wants them to do. She is a woman of the people, robust, glowing with animal vitality. There should be nothing small or ungenerous about her.
6. The end of this speech, "I don't want to offend the Count. Well, Count, so as not to offend you," I repeat in precisely this form throughout the play under similar circumstances.
7. This should not be read in a stilted manner like a speech. Mirandolina is just thinking aloud, and the speech is broken by the business of setting the table and so forth. This applies generally to long speeches; Goldoni himself has stated this in his *Memoirs*.
8. A torrent of words the way Italian people go on, tremendously rapid.
9. In this scene Mirandolina cannot be too charming. She agrees with everything and plays the modest, humble woman . . . all asides must be thrown lightly away in direction of audience but never stressed or hammered.
10. *Act 2*. Ortensia and Dejanira are common women, over-

dressed and made up, but not exaggeratedly so. They should not be made crude or vulgar; they should have a charm of good nature and vitality. Nothing in the play should be lacking in charm.

GUSTAV WIED

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Gustav Wied, the Danish novelist and playwright, has to his credit the shortest autobiography ever written:

"I came into the world quickly and easily on the 6th March, 1858. Confirmed, 1873. Bookseller. Failed at matriculation, 1880. In lawyer's office, 1881. Failed again, 1882. Tutor, 1883. One day in the Bloogaard training college, 1884. Graduated, 1885. Cand. Phil. 1886. Gave lessons by the hour, 1887. Poet, 1887. Play hissed off the stage, 1890. In jail, 1891. Married, 1896. Raised children, built a house and will finally die on the 12th April, 1927, deeply regretted by sorrowing friends and relatives."

With the exception of the last paragraph (Wied died in 1914) the outline is accurate. His failure at matriculation is ascribed chiefly to his inability to write satisfactory composition. "And to this day," he adds, "I am often uncertain where a comma should go, and where not." His tutoring, as everything else he did, was unorthodox. "In my opinion," he says, "it does not matter so much whether children learn anything as that they should be happy at their lessons." When he was jailed for his writing he made a noble resolution: "I decided to take a course in orthography, and strain every effort to write my books in such a manner that the pope himself could give them to his sisters for Christmas and birthday presents."

His success as a writer began in 1895 with an autobiographical novel—*In the Days of Youth*. At the time of his death, Wied ranked foremost among his Danish contemporaries; his thirty volumes of plays and novels insure him a place for all time in Danish literature. Only one other play is available in English translation—*The Reckoning*—which was produced at the

Provincetown Playhouse some years ago. $2 \times 2 = 5$ (known in Denmark as *Ranke Viljer*, literally Steadfast Characters) is perhaps Wied's most popular play, in which the so-called serious things in life are newly evaluated in his comic treatment.

"Wied," Ernest Boyd says, "is the personification of Danish wit." More than that he is a writer who sees life with the utmost clarity. He has said that "men differ from animals in so far as they make a great fuss about themselves." The humor, the stupidity, the ultimate futility of that "fuss" is the raw material which he shapes with the manner of those who know and still laugh.

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

by Gustav Wied

Authorized Translation

by

Ernest Boyd and Holger Koppel

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

ESTHER ABEL	<i>Ruth Wilton</i>
DORA (maid at the Abels)	<i>Oahlee Hubbard</i>
PAUL ABEL (author and schoolteacher)	<i>Harry Sothern</i>
GERHARD KONIK (a caricaturist)	<i>Egon Brecher</i>
LENA (his wife)	<i>Beatrice De Neergaard</i>
FREDERICK HAMANN	<i>John Eldredge</i>
THOMAS HAMANN (chief clerk in the government department)	<i>Paul Leyssac</i>
MARIA (his wife)	<i>Margaret Love</i>
MATHIAS HAMANN (a school principal)	<i>Sayre Crawley</i>
THE WIDOW TRUELSEN (owner of a boarding house)	<i>Leona Roberts</i>
A POLICEMAN	<i>Walter Tupper Jones</i>
OTHELLA LUSTIG (a lady of the demi-monde)	<i>Josephine Hutchinson</i>
MRS. KLUVER (the chamberlain's widow)	<i>Alma Kruger</i>
THE LAWYER	<i>J. Edward Bromberg</i>
SIVERTS (Jailer at the prison)	<i>Robert F. Ross</i>
A PRISONER	<i>Charles McCarthy</i>
THE PRISON CLERGYMAN	<i>Harold Moulton</i>
HUGO JORGENSEN	<i>J. Edward Bromberg</i>

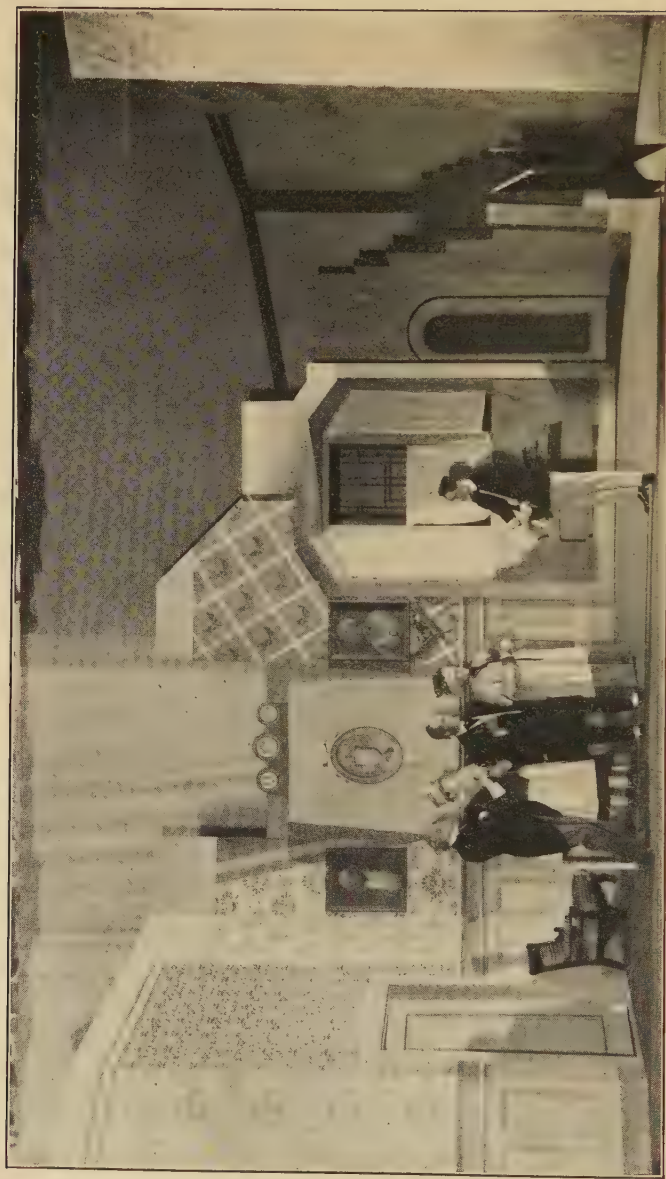


Photo by White Studio

Scene from Act I, 2 X 2 = 5

ACT ONE

Apartment of PAUL and ESTHER ABEL: A room, at the same time dining- and living-room, in the style of the Danish peasantry of olden times. White plastered walls and high, blue painted panelling, with a plate-rail all around.

In the background: Two folding doors with a side-board between. The door to the left is open and leads to the work-room of PAUL ABEL where a writing-table is seen in the center through the open door. Door to the left leads into the hall. To the right (of the audience) door leading to the kitchen.

To the left: In the foreground a broad double window with small panes, flowering potted plants and pink lace curtain with a valance. Towards the background a door leads into ESTHER's boudoir.

In the middle of the floor a long, rectangular dining-table with chairs around it.

The entire furniture, the doors and the beamed ceiling, are painted blue like the panelling and with pink lines of the same shade as the curtains, but near the windows are several wicker easy-chairs with table to match. The walls and the plate-rail are decorated with dishes and mugs of metal and earthenware.

Over the side-board in the background hang two large charcoal drawings of PAUL ABEL's parents-in-law.

TIME: Forenoon.

ESTHER in kimono, hair dressed smoothly in a "moral" fashion, stands by PAUL's writing-desk, reading with great interest some letters, which she has taken from one of the drawers in which hangs a bunch of keys.

DORA. [Comes from the kitchen carrying a tray with the lunch. She immediately discovers MRS. ABEL who does not at once notice her. She coughs slightly.] Ahem!

[ESTHER throws the letters quickly into the drawer, locks it and comes in. Lays the bunch of keys on the side-board.]

DORA. Beg your pardon, but I believe, ma'am, Mr. Abel left these keys on the window-sill.

ESTHER. [*Not hearing her.*] Have those silver spoons not turned up yet?

DORA. [*Offended. Laying the table.*] No . . . They were lost before I came here . . . [*Pause. Amused, ESTHER crosses to couch, sits and knits.*] You have no idea how they talk about Mr. Abel's new book over at the grocer's.

ESTHER. Is that so?

DORA.¹ They say it ain't good for young girls to read! [*Pause.*] Well, things got fixed up between Jespersen and me; we exchanged rings last night . . . [*Crosses down to ESTHER at couch.*] You can see for yourself . . . [*Shows her hand with the ring.*] He had it with him in his pocket from last time. [*Crosses back to table U. R. C.*]

ESTHER. [*On sofa.*] Now, I suppose, you told him that you have a child?

DORA. Sakes alive, of course I didn't. It is none of his damn business . . . it ain't his.

ESTHER. Ahem!

DORA. You mind, ma'am, if I go out again after I wash the dishes? My people are giving a party for me and Hansen.

ESTHER. But you said that you were engaged to . . .

DORA. Ye-es, but it is some kind of a farewell party they are givin' us before I fall back on Jespersen— Will it be all right for me to go?

ESTHER. Yes, run along.

DORA. [*PAUL is heard whistling off stage.*] Mr. Abel's coming. [*Goes out.*]

PAUL. [*Comes in humming from the hall with a package and a bouquet of flowers.*] For you! [*Hands her the flowers.*]

ESTHER. Have you been buying flowers again? . . . Just think of it, we can't find those silver spoons, Paul.

PAUL. [*U. C.*] Still worrying about them?

ESTHER. "Worrying"! Well . . . four lovely silver spoons! Have you any idea who could have taken them?

PAUL. Probably someone who needed them . . . [*Goes into his room and looks for something on the writing-table.*]

ESTHER. My arm is still hurting me, I can't understand what is the matter with it.

PAUL. Maybe you broke it in your sleep.

ESTHER. [*Rises takes stage C. and back to couch.*] Ah, I can never get a sensible word out of you.

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] No, you do all the serious thinking. By the way, have you seen my keys anywhere?

ESTHER. No.

PAUL.² [*Comes in again, crossing to ESTHER pinches her cheek.*] Why hasn't my little darling changed her dress when she knows her husband would like her to?

ESTHER. We have the washwoman here . . .

PAUL. Good Lord, what a reason!

ESTHER. [*Pointing.*] There are your keys. [*Crosses up to seat C.*]

PAUL. [*Crossing to get keys.*] Oh, yes, now I remember! [*Taking the keys.*] Aren't we going to eat soon, little woman? I am as hungry as a dog.

ESTHER. Yes, go ahead, lunch is ready. [*PAUL crosses ESTHER to R. of her.*] What is in that package?

PAUL. [*Stops L. of table—R.*] I am afraid to tell you.

ESTHER. What have you bought now? You know we can't afford it.

PAUL. Patent leather shoes . . .

ESTHER. [*Collapsing on seat R. of table.*] Patent leather shoes!

PAUL. Yes, but quite cheap, very cheap! I have always wanted a pair so badly; and now my book has come out I felt that . . . Let me show them to you, they are nice . . . [*Gets the package and opens it.*] Look here; and so cheap . . . 18 crowns.

ESTHER. Of course it is your money.

PAUL. [*Finds a piece of paper in one of the shoes.*] What's this? [*Reads.*] "We do not guarantee patent leather." [*Laughs merrily.*] What a damned scoundrel of a shoemaker! He didn't say a word about that! That's splendid! "We do not guarantee patent leather" . . . And I bought them just because they *were* patent leather. Ha, ha, ha!

ESTHER. You seem to think that funny.

PAUL. Yes, those little foxy tricks always amuse me. [*Puts package on seat C.*]

ESTHER. I should take them back.

PAUL. You would.

ESTHER. Or he would have had to let me have them for 16 crowns; he ought to have told you beforehand.

PAUL. But, my dear darling, then it would not have been funny. Now I shall be amused every time I wear them.

ESTHER. Just think of it, Paul, Glud, the tailor down in the basement, had one of his legs cut off yesterday at the hospital.

PAUL. [*L. of seat U. C.*] How? What luck!

ESTHER. Luck?

PAUL. Yes, for now he will get a wooden leg.

ESTHER. And you call that "luck."

PAUL. Yes, it has always been the height of my ambition to have a wooden leg. A wooden leg, red hair and buck teeth have always seemed to me the acme of physical beauty . . . Especially if one person had all three.

ESTHER. [*Rises—crosses to lunch table U. R. C. Sits, points to food indignantly.*] Let's eat!

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] With pleasure.

[*ESTHER sits R. of table U. R. C. PAUL L. of it.*]

ESTHER. Just think of it, Paul . . .

PAUL. Good Lord! Must I think again?

ESTHER. Well, I have to *talk* to you.

PAUL. Yes, but you always bring up such sad subjects . . . Don't you know of anyone who has been divorced or had his appendix cut out?

ESTHER. [*Serving him.*] Here you are . . . Here is some sausage.

PAUL. [*Looking at the dishes.*] Thanks . . . They look to me like a lot of islands scattered in the Pacific Ocean . . . You might have spent a little more on me today as I am free and lunching at home.

ESTHER. We are washing . . . And the housekeeping money must last, especially when you buy all those patent leather shoes.

PAUL. I have only bought two.

ESTHER. Anyhow Dora is doing some creamed potatoes.
[*Rings.*]

PAUL. Potatoes are good . . . especially when you're trying to slenderize.

[*DORA comes in R., stands in doorway.*]

ESTHER. Where are the potatoes?

DORA. Oh! I forgot all about them. Jespersen is in the kitchen.
[*Goes out.*]

PAUL. No hurry, Dora, we can eat them for dessert! It seems to me that last month his name was Hansen?

ESTHER. [*Stiffly.*] Yes . . . but now she's gone back to Jespersen again. This immorality is shocking.

PAUL. Yes, it is delightfully immoral. . . . But look here, Esther, the newspapers have already started raising Cain about my book. [*He hands her some newspapers.*]

ESTHER. [*Puts them aside.*] Thanks.

PAUL. You are really a remarkable person, little wife . . . in your own cute way.

ESTHER. I do not understand how you're not ashamed to write such books! And they are getting worse and worse.

PAUL. It must be some kind of a disease I have. . . .

ESTHER. I don't expect you to consider *me*, but have you no consideration for my family?

PAUL. [*Speaking to the portraits over the side-board.*] Forgive me, you two up there.

[*ESTHER gets up angrily starts to cross R. PAUL grabs her hand as she gets L. of him.*]

PAUL. [*Slightly tired.*] Dear, sweet, delightful, charming Esther, what's the use of these eternal "scenes"? Come on now and be nice. You ought to learn to take a joke. That is the one thing that makes life tolerable. . . . And you know quite well that I love you dearly.

ESTHER. I love you dearly too. . . . But I can't stand you. . . ! And I find more and more that we differ so much in our point of view of life that we probably ought never to have married.

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] That's the first sensible thing you've ever said. [*Teasing.*] But you came back to me all right, little woman. . . .

ESTHER. That was not my fault. My parents made me come back. [*The door-bell rings.*]

PAUL. That must be Freda. . . . Let us be friends again for an hour or two? Shall we? [ESTHER *turns her back on him. A voice in the hall. Listening.*] No, it is . . . Well, if it isn't the "caricature" with his wife! [Beckoning ESTHER.] Esther . . . come on.

ESTHER. [*Turning away.*] No. . . .

[PAUL *goes out in the hall and returns immediately with GERHARD and MRS. KONIK. MR. and MRS. KONIK cross to R. C. PAUL takes stage L.*]

KONIK.² [*Dashes at ESTHER.*] Aren't you proud of your husband, Mrs. Abel? How are you? What a book he has written! Splendid, wonderful, mad, amazing! He will go to jail some day.

PAUL. Don't talk to my wife about my books, Gerhard, she does not read them.

KONIK. Rats! I know of course that all women are more or less crazy but . . .

ESTHER. [*Stiffly.*] No, it is really true, Mr. Konik . . .

KONIK. The woman must be crazy, Lena!

MRS. KONIK. Shame on you, Gerhard.

PAUL. Dear Esther, those two abnormal people have been married nine years and during all that time they have not been separated for an hour.

ESTHER. You have told me that *already*.

KONIK. That's because Lena gets cold feet when she is not near me . . . This is a splendid room, Paul.

PAUL. Yes, isn't it? Won't you have lunch with us? There is a rumor that the girl has some creamed potatoes . . .

ESTHER. My husband is always so witty . . .

MRS. KONIK. [*To PAUL.*] Thank you, but we have just had lunch.

PAUL. A cup of coffee?

KONIK. I hate coffee.

PAUL. Good Lord! A cigar then?

KONIK. Thanks. [*Crossing U. C. PAUL goes into his room.*] Look at the room, Lena!

MRS. KONIK. Marvelous—splendiferous.

[PAUL brings cigars.]

ESTHER. That is my husband's taste, not mine . . .

KONIK. [*Crossing up stage.*] He ought to consult a good doctor.

PAUL. My taste is not "serious" enough to suit her.

KONIK. Liar! But who are those two elderly gorillas hanging up there? [PAUL laughing to himself sits on stairs.] I'll be damned if they add to the charm of the scene.

[PAUL blows his nose ostentatiously.]

ESTHER. They are my parents, Mr. Konik . . .

KONIK. [*Turns a step C. with MRS. KONIK.*] The Lord have mercy on me . . . Yes, of course I meant . . . I beg your pardon!

ESTHER. Don't mention it. [PAUL rises.] But I believe you would rather be alone with your friends a while, Paul . . . I have the washerwoman in today, Mrs. Konik, so you will excuse me. [*Goes into the boudoir and closes the door.*]

KONIK. [*Embarrassed.*] I think I have insulted her.

MRS. KONIK. You talk too much, Gerhard.

KONIK. I'm afraid so. [DORA enters R., crosses to luncheon table U. R. C.]

PAUL. Nonsense, it is because my wife is so touchy. Here, here, I expect Freda, so wait a bit. [*Crossing to DORA at table.*]

KONIK. Have you more women in the house? .

[DORA goes out giggling.]

PAUL. Yes, and this is one to suit *your* taste.

KONIK. I don't believe it . . . Lena is enough for me. [*With a gesture towards the boudoir.*] Isn't your wife coming back?

PAUL. No, she doesn't like joy to be unconfined . . . She ran away from me once because I laughed too loudly.

KONIK. Yes, I heard about it . . . And you fetched her back with sweet words?

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Not at all, my boy! She came crawling back and asked my pardon.

KONIK. Thanks for the information.

MRS. KONIK. How you men like to talk.

KONIK. Be silent, woman, when men are speaking!

MRS. KONIK. Yes, you are "some" man! [*Pats his cheek.*]

KONIK. Get thee behind me!

MRS. KONIK. Look at him blushing! He always does that when I pet him.

KONIK. I am blushing for you . . . That you cannot control your libidinous desires when we are among strangers! But tell me, Paul, for I am very much interested . . . Where did you find her, that jewel of yours in there? My crown-jewel, as you know, I met in a dance hall. [MRS. KONIK *sits L. of table U. C.*]

PAUL. And I found mine at a ball at [*Points.*] the chromos up there.

MRS. KONIK. [*Drily.*] Yes, marriages are made in the seventh Heaven.

KONIK. [*Joyfully.*] Aha, even a blind hen can find a grain of corn! [*Sits on seat with MRS. KONIK L. of her.*]

PAUL. You lack "depth", Mrs. Konik.³ [*Sits on seat U. C. R. of MRS. KONIK.*] Well, I got acquainted with Esther's brother at Rudersholm at the house of Chamberlain Kluver's widow, where he was studying forestry, while I was tutoring the son who died . . . I don't think you have met the brother, Gerhard? He is the limit! I expect him in a few minutes . . . And he invited me to his home for a ball; and then . . . But Esther is sweet.

KONIK. She looks a little sour, if you ask me.

PAUL. Well, she is a bit domestic.

KONIK. They are awful when they get that way.

PAUL. If she would only brush her hair away from her forehead . . . Don't you think so, Mrs. Konik?

MRS. KONIK. Yes, she has a very sweet face.

KONIK. Well, you see I place more weight on the spiritual side!

MRS. KONIK. [*Smiling.*] Thanks . . .

PAUL. I fell madly in love with her.

KONIK. Yes, you have always been so feverish . . . Let me see: First there was Magda; then it was Fernanda; then Othella . . . All happy names ending in "a"! "Othella the golden haired." [PAUL *kicks* KONIK.] I have told Lena all about your "affairs" so you need not sit there and kick me! By the way, what became of Othella?

PAUL. Now, really, he is *too* bad, Mrs. Konik.

MRS. KONIK. Inexcusable!

KONIK. Wasn't she at the start something or other at the Chamberlain's?

PAUL. Yes, she was learning housekeeping there.

KONIK. You must have been a swell bunch! Weren't you supposed to be in love with Her Ladyship?

MRS. KONIK. [*Bashfully.*] Now you shut up, Gerhard.

PAUL. Oh, let him go on, Mrs. Konik, it airs out the room so nicely.

KONIK. And after all you ended, as we all end, by getting a legitimate spouse.

PAUL. After all, Esther is not one of the worst . . .

KONIK. Good Heavens, no! Marriage puts the lid on love; so we must all be eternally thankful that we are not burdened with one still worse than what we have!

MRS. KONIK. [*Embracing him.*] Oh, you charmer!

KONIK. Paul, drag her off!

MRS. KONIK. Now we are not going to talk any longer about "women." We want to talk a bit about Paul's book . . . and then we must go home and do some drawing.

KONIK. She is so puffed up because she earns more than I do by doing these rotten fashion designs.

MRS. KONIK. Well, then why don't you accept the position of drawing-teacher you have been offered by that school?

KONIK. Never! Do you think I am going to accept a "job"?

MRS. KONIK. "Man is ennobled by labour," Gerhard dear, you know that very well.

KONIK. Nonsense! Do you believe, for instance, that Hamlet would have become such a noble being if he had been a bond salesman?

MRS. KONIK. Don't you think that he ought to, Paul? Why, it is only a few hours a day.

KONIK. But think of it, to have to get up and go to the school with a sandwich in one's pocket! I should take poison after the very first lesson.

MRS. KONIK. It would be nice to have some steady position now the children are growing up . . . You did not answer me, Paul Abel?

PAUL. It is not nice to be tied down . . .

MRS. KONIK. But you let yourself be tied down . . .

PAUL. Yes, and I am sorry for it every day.

MRS. KONIK. We cannot live on drawing in the long run.

PAUL. Seems to me there are enough things to caricature here.

MRS. KONIK. Yes, but it would be such a comfort to have a sure income to fall back on; especially when you have children.

KONIK. If we fall, we'll never "fall back." We'll push ahead all right . . . And just suppose I should make a caricature of my principal for the newspaper!

MRS. KONIK. Of course you could not do *that*!

KONIK. No, but I'm sure that I should do it, anyhow! . . . But let's talk of Paul's book . . . that's much more interesting.

PAUL. Well, what do you think of it?

KONIK. My dear boy, I'm sorry to say it, but this time the least that can happen to you will be partial execution.

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Nonsense! My book is moral in the truest sense of the word. I simply show people as they really are.

KONIK. That's all right, but they do not appreciate that a bit! Ask my sticking plaster.

MRS. KONIK. No, I really *must* say, Paul Abel, that . . .

KONIK. You see. . . . Her tone is enough.

PAUL. But I *insist* on showing them up anyhow.

KONIK. That's the stuff! And a hundred years from now, when you are dead and harmless, you will be read in the schools and at confirmations; they will read you aloud in the churches! It is only a question of sticking to it!

PAUL. Well, I'm going to.

[FREDERICK HAMANN *creeps in, having slowly opened the door from the kitchen during the last few sentences. He is an effeminate young man, his clothes somewhat the worse for wear.*]

KONIK. [*Discovering him.*] In God's name, what kind of a bird is that?

FREDERICK.³ How do you do, Paul? . . . I've been hiding in there.

PAUL. How do you do, my dear Freda? . . . You're always welcome.

KONIK. [*Crossing MRS. KONIK to C. MRS. KONIK follows him.*] Is *that* the lady you were expecting?

PAUL. Yes, that's my sister-in-law, Freda! [*Pulls FREDERICK*

out in the middle of the floor in spite of his resistance.] I must introduce you! My friends, Mr. and Mrs. Konik . . .

FREDERICK. [*Awkwardly.*] . . . How do you do—

KONIK. [*Heartily turning FREDERICK around for inspection.*] I certainly should love to draw you as a young lady of the period. What do you think, Lena?

MRS. KONIK. [*In a friendly manner to FREDERICK.*] Please don't mind his nonsense, Mr. Hamaar.

PAUL. Freda, won't you have some lunch?

FREDERICK. [*L. of table U. R. C.*] Thanks . . . but you have company.

KONIK. Do you smack your lips when you eat?

FREDERICK. Goodness, no . . .

KONIK. Go ahead and eat.

FREDERICK. Aren't you terrible?

PAUL. [*Down R.*] Are you hungry?

FREDERICK. Goodness, yes!

MRS. KONIK. [*Crosses to U. L. above table.*] Just sit down and eat, Mr. Hamann, and let the others talk.

[*FREDERICK sits down. MRS. KONIK offers him food.*]

KONIK. [*To PAUL.*] He's a wonder!

PAUL. Yes, isn't he great? He is the most human thing in the Hamann family. I simply love him. [*PAUL crosses L.*]

FREDERICK. [*To MRS. KONIK.*] Thanks, it's very kind of you . . . [*Eats—sighs deeply.*]

PAUL. [*C.*] What's the trouble, Freda?

FREDERICK. Oh, nothing—or at least, almost nothing . . . where is my sister?

KONIK. [*Pointing.*] She's in there sulking.

FREDERICK. Again. . . ? Ah yes, life is not always a bed of roses.

PAUL. You really ought to try to get something to do, little Freda.

FREDERICK. My God, Paul, you know I am always looking for a position! Isn't it strange, whenever I write to people they seem so pleasant and write me to come and see them . . . But when they see me . . . I ought to have become a poet . . .

[*PAUL bursts out laughing.*]

KONIK. He is superb!

MRS. KONIK. [*Offering him food.*] Do eat, Mr. Hamann . . .

FREDERICK. A thousand thanks . . . Yes, *women* always like me! Oh, Paul, I met Valborg to-day . . .

PAUL. Well, what did she have to say?

FREDERICK. Unfortunately her mother is on the mend again, the old devil, and there is a chance of her recovering . . . [*To MRS. KONIK.*] Valborg is a sort of fiancée I have, but her tyrannical mother objects to our engagement.

PAUL. Yes, and furthermore Valborg has money.

[*PAUL and KONIK cross up to round seat U. C.*]

FREDERICK. Yes, lots of it! But she can't get it until her mother, the old hag, dies.

MRS. KONIK. One does not talk in that manner of the mother of one's fiancée, Mr. Hamann.

FREDERICK. You bet your life you do, when you know her! Valborg Swanshield is the name of my little friend.

MRS. KONIK. What a sweet name . . .

FREDERICK. Ah, love, Mrs. Konik, is what we need, and mutual aid. It seems to me that the well-to-do ought to open their purses a little wider . . . don't you?

MRS. KONIK. [*Somewhat confused.*] Ye-es . . . [*Handing him a dish.*] Here you are, smoked herring.

FREDERICK. [*Puts it on his plate.*] Thank you . . . you radiate kindness!

KONIK. [*To PAUL.*] He is unique! Just look at Lena, she is quite gone on him.

FREDERICK. [*To MRS. KONIK.*] Do you love your husband?

MRS. KONIK. I do.

FREDERICK. All wives don't love their husbands . . . do they?

MRS. KONIK. No, unfortunately . . .

FREDERICK. [*Who during the last part of the conversation has been somewhat absent-minded and has been waiting for PAUL to turn his back, makes some mystic signs to MRS. KONIK as if asking her to say nothing about what he is doing; he takes some silver spoons from his pocket and places them on the table.*] Swear that you will be silent! Recently I was without means of support . . .

[*MRS. KONIK thoroughly puzzled.*]

KONIK. [*Noticing FREDERICK's actions, says to PAUL.*] Aha, so he *steals* too!

PAUL. I thought he was the person who must have taken them. Oh, no, he merely borrows.

KONIK. He is a wonder! I wish Lena had a brother like him.

ESTHER. [*Comes in from the boudoir and goes quickly into the hall.*] Father and mother are coming up. I saw them from the window. How are you, Frederick . . . [*Goes into the hall.*] [*FREDERICK gets up nervously from the table.*]

MRS. KONIK. It is time for us to go, Gerhard.

KONIK. Under no circumstances! [*Pointing to the portraits hanging over the side-board.*] I must see if they really exist.

PAUL. Of course, you must stay . . . they are really worth seeing.

KONIK. Does your brother-in-law *really* steal? You must bring him along some day to our house.

[*ESTHER comes in with MR. and MRS. HAMANN. FREDERICK has sneaked into PAUL's room and has closed the door. MR. and MRS. HAMANN bow in a reserved manner.*]

PAUL. [*Introducing.*] Gerhard Konik, the caricaturist, and Mrs. Konik . . . I suppose at the office you have often had a good laugh at Konik's drawings?

HAMANN.⁴ [*Crosses over to ESTHER R. turns sharply—speaks.*] No, I don't remember . . . [*Turns to ESTHER—kisses her forehead.*]

MRS. HAMANN.⁵ I have seen them and find some of them quite witty. [*Follows HAMANN over R.*]

[*KONIK bows his thanks.*]

MRS. KONIK. [*Aside.*] Come on now, Gerhard . . .

KONIK. We must talk a bit to them first, Lena! [*Steps forward.*] That's a splendid son-in-law you have, Mr. Hamann; what books he writes!

[*PAUL visibly enjoying the situation. ESTHER looks at him angrily.*]

MR. HAMANN. My son-in-law goes his own way. . . .

KONIK. Yes, so he does. He's wonderful!

MRS. HAMANN. [*Smiling.*] My husband does not think that it is just the right way.

KONIK. A new way is always the right way!

MR. HAMANN. Yes, when it becomes old and is safe.

PAUL. [*Aside to KONIK.*] Go at 'em again!

KONIK. [*Perspiring.*] No, then it is no longer any good, Mr.

Hamann, for then new ways must be found once more.

MR. HAMANN. And everything old must be discarded?

KONIK. No, they hang it up in a museum and call it "history."

[*Crosses R. of MRS. KONIK. MRS. KONIK pulls at him.*]

Don't do that, Lena! This is so intellectual.

PAUL.⁶ [*With a smile.*] Now, for instance, when we get that liberal government they talk so much about, then you, my dear father-in-law, as a loyal official of course must . . .

MRS. HAMANN. [*Crossing a little C.*] You are quite right, Paul, a government official must share the view of the government. That is simply his duty . . .

MR. HAMANN. [*Crosses to chair L. of table U. R. C. Places chair, seats himself for speech.*] My dear Paul . . . and you, too, my dear Maria . . .

MRS. HAMANN. [*U. C.*] Don't go behind a chair; you are not making an after-dinner speech!

MR. HAMANN. [*Comes from behind the chair; takes stand L. of table R.*] My dear Paul, we are not going to have that so much talked-of liberal government. *Never.* The conservative elements in our country are too firmly in the saddle for that.

MRS. HAMANN. [*They both forget, little by little, that they are not alone.*] I wonder?

MR. HAMANN. And if they should get it, that very day my resignation would be sent in, I'll tell you that! We still have some men of principle in this land!

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, you have always been rather narrow-minded.

MR. HAMANN. You don't say so?

MRS. HAMANN. It's the truth. [*ESTHER tries to get in between them but her MOTHER pushes her aside—PAUL and KONIK enjoy the situation. MRS. KONIK is ill at ease.*] You know what I think you ought to do, Thomas?

MR. HAMANN. No. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. You ought to subscribe at once to a liberal paper and get familiar with the situation.

MR. HAMANN. Ahem!

MRS. HAMANN. Your brother Mathias is going to.

MR. HAMANN. Oh well, Mathias. . . !

MRS. HAMANN. He has ten times more sense than you have!

MR. HAMANN. Yes, he isn't married either.

MRS. HAMANN. That's true.

MR. HAMANN. Yes, that's true! Perhaps you would like me to put on a pair of red trousers, too?

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, if you think they would be becoming to you!

MRS. KONIK. [*Aside.*] Let's go now, Gerhard.

KONIK. [*To MRS. KONIK.*] Oh, this is too amusing for words.

MRS. KONIK. No, we're going at once . . . [*Both cross down C. To ESTHER.*] Good-bye, Mrs. Abel . . . I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon at our house?

ESTHER. [*Stiffly.*] Thank you . . . [*They take leave.*]

[*KONIK and MRS. KONIK swing round, cross to door up L. speaking as they go.*]

KONIK. [*To PAUL who goes with them out in the hall.*] You have an insanely wonderful family! Aren't you charmed?

PAUL. Yes, insanely charmed. [*Goes into the hall. Pause. On their exit ESTHER crosses to chair U. R. C., sits dejectedly. Mr. and Mrs. HAMANN scowl angrily at one another.*]

MRS. HAMANN. You were so silent, little Esther . . . That wasn't quite polite to the company.

ESTHER. Oh, they only called on Paul.

MRS. HAMANN. Your husband's friends are your own. . . ! And then you are still in a kimono!

ESTHER. We are washing . . .

MRS. HAMANN. In your place, Esther dear, I should try to be more particular about dressing . . . you know the first few years . . .

ESTHER. Oh, nobody cares how I look!

MR. HAMANN. Hem!! We expected to find Frederick here . . .

ESTHER. He was here a few moments ago . . . Yes, there are his hat and stick . . .

MR. HAMANN. I wish you would find him . . . [*ESTHER goes into her boudoir. Mr. and Mrs. HAMANN scowl without speaking. Crossing room to L. C.*] Paul has a bad influence on Frederick . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Nobody has *any* influence on Frederick . . .

MR. HAMANN. Paul has! [*Turns quickly to MRS. HAMANN, backing around room to R. above MRS. HAMANN.*] This room is really a fright!

MRS. HAMANN. I find it both original and in good taste.

MR. HAMANN. I suppose that is on account of your being a "liberal." [*Crosses L. of MRS. HAMANN.*] But he has let us hang there since Esther's birthday.

MRS. HAMANN. We don't fit in here. I said that at once.

MR. HAMANN. But I still say that he has let us hang there.

MRS. HAMANN. No doubt it is against his real wishes. And I must say he is right.

MR. HAMANN. But we *are* hanging there, I maintain that!

MRS. HAMANN. [*Jumps at him.*] Good gracious, look at your tie . . . [*Tears it loose and ties it again.*]

[*ESTHER comes in from PAUL's room. FREDERICK comes behind her, shamefacedly.*]

MR. HAMANN. My son, why are you hiding from your parents? [*FREDERICK mumbles something.*]

MRS. HAMANN. Now, Thomas, I must ask you to think before you speak . . . And don't go behind a chair!

MR. HAMANN. [*Takes position by table R. To FREDERICK.*] My son, this morning twenty crowns disappeared from my desk . . .

ESTHER. Oh, Frederick . . .

MRS. HAMANN. You are so clumsy, Thomas! It isn't at all sure that he took them . . . You didn't take that money, my boy?

FREDERICK. Ye-es.

MR. HAMANN. He confesses! You see!

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, he has always been so honest.

MR. HAMANN. It would have been much nicer if you had asked me for them. . . .

FREDERICK. Only then you would not have given them to me . . . And I simply had to have them . . .

MR. HAMANN. And if I may ask: Why did you have to have them?

MRS. HAMANN. Now, don't get excited, Thomas. . . !

FREDERICK. [*Points, after some hesitation.*] For those spoons . . .

ESTHER. The spoons . . . So *you* took them!

FREDERICK. You see I am returning them . . .

ESTHER. Yet, you say you're so fond of Paul!

FREDERICK. That's why I redeemed them . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, Frederick will go through fire for those he loves!

MR. HAMANN. But to take from the little money your father has . . .

FREDERICK. I like Paul better . . .

MR. HAMANN. [*To MRS. HAMANN.*] There, you see. It's *Paul* who spoils him with his crazy ideas.

FREDERICK. [*With pathos. PAUL enters.*] Paul! The finest, best and noblest friend. The only person that understands me . . .

PAUL. [*Comes in from the hall with a letter in his hand.*] It seems to me, little Freda, that you're taking my name in vain?

ESTHER. Your "famous" name!

MRS. HAMANN. Frederick's good heart has made him . . .

MR. HAMANN. "Good heart" your grandmother! Judge for yourself, my dear Paul. [*Takes position behind chair.*] This morning Frederick took twenty crowns from my desk in order to redeem some silverware which Esther says he had taken from here!

PAUL. [*Merrily crossing to FREDa, pats his cheek.*] Mrs. Hamann is right: Frederick has always been very good-hearted! [*Slaps his hand.*]

ESTHER. [*To PAUL.*] Is this affair to be treated with your usual levity?

PAUL. Why not call it magnanimity?

MR. HAMANN. You are totally unable to see things from a serious point of view, Paul.

MRS. HAMANN. Frederick must be handled with kindness, then he can be influenced.

PAUL. [*Pleasantly at the start.*] You're right! [*Patting his cheek.*] Frederick is simply the fairy prince in the Hamann family! If I did not have *him* I should be unable to stand

being married to you all! Frederick is a human being, that's why I love him . . . The rest of you are too pompous for me.

FREDERICK. And I love you, Paul! You're the only one . . .

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Many thanks, Freda! . . . [*Crosses up stage, turns.*] And thank you for the spoons. If you want to borrow them another time just help yourself!

MR. HAMANN. You're spoiling that boy, Paul.

PAUL. You're right! . . . Just as you have spoiled Esther!

MRS. HAMANN. [*Soothingly.*] There, there, Paul dear . . .

PAUL. [*Going upstairs.*] Well, I'm going . . . I must write some letters . . . [*Bows.*] Please excuse me if I became really serious for a moment; I promise never to do it again. [*Goes into his room.*]

[*FREDERICK quietly takes his hat and stick, starts upstairs.*]

MR. HAMANN. Where are you going?

FREDERICK. [*Going upstairs.*] When you chase my best friend out of his favourite room then I too must leave . . .

MR. HAMANN. You stay *here*!

FREDERICK. Good-bye . . . [*Bows as PAUL did, goes out through the kitchen.*]

[*MR. HAMANN, Crossing L. Pause.*]

MR. HAMANN.⁷ [*Takes ESTHER, seats her in chair L. of table U. R. C., stands R. of her. To ESTHER who has been standing like a statue.*] Tell me darling, is Paul nasty to you?

ESTHER. Nasty . . . No-o . . . He sits in his room and writes and I sit in *mine* bored to death . . .

MR. HAMANN. Ye-es . . . But what happens at meals?

ESTHER. Then we quarrel.

MR. HAMANN. All husbands and wives do that, but . . .

ESTHER. And then he buys patent leather shoes . . . and we have just about enough money for housekeeping! [*Rises.*] And he fixes up a room like this and buys furniture and flowers . . . and I need a new costume so badly . . . And now I have also discovered that he . . . [*Stops.*]

MRS. HAMANN. What have you discovered. . . ?

ESTHER. [*Breaking into tears.—Hotly.*] I wish I had never married him! We don't suit one another at all. He is never

serious; and you know I am . . . I want to love him but he only makes fun of that . . .

MR. HAMANN. Well, I told you so . . . but your dear mother . . .

MRS. HAMANN. If you think, Thomas, that it's any use to forbid two young people . . . What do we invite people to balls for anyway?

ESTHER. No, if you had forbidden it, then I should have been quite sure to have taken him anyhow! But you ought not to have persuaded me to go back to him last year when . . .

MRS. HAMANN. My dear Esther, one does not leave one's husband in that manner. You see how your father and I have stuck together; let that be an example to you . . . People must learn to bend and to give in to each other as we have, so that full harmony may be attained . . . ahem . . . ahem . . . [*The bell rings in the hall.*] Thank Heaven, someone is coming!

[HAMANN, the School Principal, comes in quickly to U. L. C. Crosses to MRS. HAMANN.]

MRS. HAMANN. [*Goes toward him joyfully.*] So it's you, my dear Mathias.

THE PRINCIPAL. [*Kisses her hand.*] Unfortunately I haven't come on a pleasant errand, Maria . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Not on a pleasant errand . . .

THE PRINCIPAL. No . . .

MRS. HAMANN. What has happened?

THE PRINCIPAL. What has happened is that . . .

MR. HAMANN. [*Pointedly.*] How do you do, Mathias!

THE PRINCIPAL. [*Crossing to C. between MRS. HAMANN and ESTHER.*] How do you do, Thomas. How do you do? How-do, Esther? Is Paul in?

ESTHER. What's the matter with Paul?

THE PRINCIPAL. Just this, Esther, that I have to dismiss him from the school—[HAMANN walks diagonally down front.] at least for the present. Much as I hate to do it.

MRS. HAMANN. Dismiss him! Why? The children like him so much.

MR. HAMANN. Dismiss him! Impossible; why it would hurt

me in the office . . . And I am soon to celebrate my twenty-fifth anniversary there.

ESTHER. Is it the book he has just published? [ESTHER *walks diagonally down front.*]

THE PRINCIPAL. Yes, unfortunately, it's the book . . . [THE PRINCIPAL *walks diagonally down front.*]

MRS. HAMANN. But what has happened, Mathias? [MRS. HAMANN *walks diagonally down front.*] It can't be the book alone . . .

PAUL. [*In the door from his room.*] Good morning, Mr. Hamann! I recognized your voice . . . I may tell you, Mrs. Hamann, that *this* ridiculous thing has happened: I am to be prosecuted for my "indecent" book . . . I was just informed about it in a letter I received a few moments ago.

MR. HAMANN. Prosecuted! My son-in-law!

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Yes, isn't it a piece of impudence?

ESTHER. And you're actually laughing at it?

PAUL. Yes, my dear Esther, in a tiresome little country like ours, where we ought to be happy for the smallest ray of sunshine.

ESTHER. Sunshine . . . ! [*To the others.*] There, you see!

MR. HAMANN. And so, Paul . . . I mean Abel . . . you call it "a ray of 'sunshine'" to be thrown into jail!

PAUL. Yes . . . intellectually speaking! It is a change anyhow!

THE PRINCIPAL. My dear Paul, don't carry the joke too far . . .

PAUL. The joke? Why, I am quite serious!

MR. HAMANN. And you do not consider at all the shame and disgrace you cause your family.

PAUL. Not at all!

MRS. HAMANN. [*Soothingly.*] There, there, Paul . . .

MR. HAMANN. [*Crossing to R. of him.*] Esther, dear, I trust you'll know what to do?

THE PRINCIPAL. But my dear Thomas . . . !

MRS. HAMANN. Have you gone crazy, Thomas? Are you going to force your daughter to leave her husband?

ESTHER. [*Embracing her father.*] I'm going with you! I won't stay another hour in this house!

[THE PRINCIPAL and MRS. HAMANN *trying to speak.*]

MRS. HAMANN. Don't go behind a chair!

MR. HAMANN. [*From behind a chair.*] Hush! My daughter is right. . . . She and Paul cannot remain together! As a government official I cannot have a son-in-law who stands condemned by public opinion . . . ! And for all I care, my wife and my esteemed brother may say and do whatever they please!

PAUL. [*Calmly.*] I thoroughly agree with Mr. Hamann.

ESTHER. You do, Paul?

PAUL. Of course I cannot bear to drag you and your "official" father along to the scaffold.

ESTHER. [*Unable to control herself.*] Is it that woman?

PAUL. Which woman?

ESTHER. The one with the letters. . . . The woman with the golden hair?

PAUL. [*Smiling.*] So you've gone through my private papers, darling?

ESTHER. You want that woman . . . that's why you want to get rid of me!

PAUL. I was under the impression that *you* wanted to leave me, Esther.

ESTHER. Well, I shall not stand in your way any longer.

MR. HAMANN. Quite right, Esther. . . . You have the same principles as your father!

ESTHER. [*Close to Paul.*] You'll never see me again! *Never!* [*Goes out.*]

[*PAUL bows.*]

MR. HAMANN. I shall take the liberty of sending my lawyer to you in a few days, Mr. Abel! [*Goes out to ESTHER.*]

[*PAUL bows.*]

MRS. HAMANN.^s [*Confused.*] My dear Mathias, we must. . . . Excuse me, Paul, but for Heaven's sake, we must. . . . Come along, Mathias; those two crazy people . . . [*She goes out with THE PRINCIPAL upstairs.*]

PAUL. [*Bows for the third time—and sinks into a chair, laughing.*] What the gods have put asunder let no man join together!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

PAUL ABEL'S bachelor apartment—the study. In the background a door into PAUL'S bedroom and one into the hall. To the right two windows, a piano between them.

To the left towards the foreground PAUL'S writing-table from the First Act; towards the background a door leading into the widow TRUELSEN'S apartment. In the middle of the floor placed askew in front of the piano is a bed.

Afternoon.

PAUL and the WIDOW in conversation.

PAUL. [*Lying on bed.*] . . . And what good luck that my old rooms here just happened to be vacant.

MRS. TRUELSEN.¹ [*By arm-chair L. C.*] Yes, just like I had a kind of presentiment, Mr. Abel. . . . People do not stay long together these times.

PAUL. No, it isn't easy to stay married for any length of time . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. Yet a good many people believe in marriage, Mr. Abel . . .

PAUL. And a good many people believe in Mohammed too. . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Rocks in chair.*] Ye-es. . . . The good Lord was kind enough to take Truelsen before he got too bad, and then to give me this boarding house.

PAUL. Ah, freedom! Golden, shining freedom . . . and then a boarding house when one gets old.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Ye-es. . . . But there is one thing about freedom; it kind of depresses you after you get it, and then you long to be tied once more.

PAUL. But you retained *yours* all the same!

MRS. TRUELSEN. I did that . . . but that is probably because I am getting on in years, otherwise I don't know but what I might have tempted fortune once more . . . worse than with Truelsen it couldn't have been— By the way, I hope you

don't intend to take up with that Miss Lustig again . . . ?
I saw her sneaking about here yesterday.

PAUL. [*Striking attitude on bed.*] Heaven forbid, Mrs. Truelsen, I was glad enough to get rid of her! What does she look like now?

MRS. TRUELSEN. Well, how do that sort of people look, Mr. Abel . . . ? You can hardly see them for all their hair! What a bold hussy she was! [*The hall bell rings and MRS. TRUELSEN crosses out R.*] The bell is ringing. . . . [*Goes out and comes back quickly, stands in door R. I.*] For the Lord's sake, a policeman wants to speak to you! Can it be about the book?

PAUL. I suppose so.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Shall I tell him that you are out . . . ? That's what I do for my other lodgers when bills come for them or such things.

PAUL. No, just let him come in.

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*In the doorway.*] Come in, officer . . . [MRS. TRUELSEN exits L. I.]

THE POLICEMAN. [*Comes in.*] Beg pardon, is that Mr. Abel?

PAUL. [*Rises, crosses to him R. I.*] Yes . . . what can I do for you?

[MRS. TRUELSEN goes into her apartment.]

THE POLICEMAN. I have a letter for Mr. Abel from Inspector Rorby. . . . The Inspector would have come himself but could not leave the office.

PAUL. [*Takes the letter.*] Thank you [*Gives POLICEMAN cigar.*] . . . is there any answer?

THE POLICEMAN. Yes, the Inspector asked me to bring a reply if you were in.

PAUL. [*Opens the letter and reads it.*] Well, I'll be damned! Please tell Inspector Rorby that I'll be there . . . and give him my thanks and best regards.

THE POLICEMAN. All right, sir, good-bye! [*Goes out.*]

PAUL. [*Crossing C. reading the letter over again. Laughing.*] Now he is getting a bit too adventurous!

[*Voices heard in the hall. The WIDOW comes in with GERHARD KONIK and WIFE—GERHARD carries a roll of cartoons under his arm. KONIK down stage. MRS. KONIK above him.*]

KONIK. Did he come here to grab you, that cop?

[PAUL rises, crosses to MRS. KONIK. MRS. TRUELSEN takes stage C.]

PAUL. No, not yet. . . . How are you, my dear Mrs. Lena?
[Embraces her.]

KONIK. [Separating them.] Here! here! here! The girl belongs to me!

MRS. TRUELSEN. How lovely it is to see one's old friends again!

KONIK. [PAUL crosses, sits again on bed.] Same to you, Mrs. Truelsen! Seems to me you have got thin with longing.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Oh, you . . . [Crosses L. C.]

MRS. KONIK. Yes, he's the same as ever, Mrs. Truelsen. Ill-bred and irresistible. [Petting him.]

KONIK. Don't touch me!

MRS. TRUELSEN. [R. of arm-chair.] And how lovely it is once in a while to see a married couple loving one another! [Goes into her apartment bowing and smiling.]

PAUL. [Kneeling on bed.] And so, dear children, you see me sitting here again, praising the Lord, a bachelor going on his third month!

MRS. KONIK. Shame on you, Paul Abel, how can you talk like that . . . ?

KONIK. [Coming little C.] "Talk," wife . . . ? Paul had fallen as deep as a man *could* fall; he had married. And now that he stands upright once more you don't want him to praise the Lord?

PAUL. [With a little sigh.] Ah, yes, it's easy for you two. You sit high above all storms, hand in hand! But isn't it a bit of a bore at times?

MRS. KONIK. [Indignantly.] A bore!

KONIK. See how she bristles! Do you know what I call her? The little soldier! [Puts an arm around her.] Oh, you, my ever—ever new little joy! [Kisses her.]

MRS. KONIK. [Close to him.] Don't touch me! Oh, Paul, why didn't you love your wife?

PAUL. I really did love her! [Jumps over bed, gets down. KONIK and MRS. KONIK cross to him.] And she loved me, too, she said . . . Only she couldn't stand me! [Brings wine and

cigars.] Here's to your health, dear friends! And thanks for your faithfulness to each other . . . and to me!

KONIK. Here's luck! But can you keep away from women in future, old man?

PAUL. You bet your life I can! [*MR. and MRS. KONIK sit on L. side of bed.*] One does not sell one's birthright more than once. [*Sits in arm-chair.*] No household, no wife, no parents-in-law, no quarreling! What books I shall be able to write! I have already the outline of one and it is to be called "Liberty"!

KONIK. You ought to write that while in jail!

PAUL. That's exactly what I'm going to do!

MRS. KONIK. You men never grow up. . . . But that's why we like you so much.

KONIK. Shut up, darling! I'm afraid, though, that you won't get to jail, my dear Paul.

PAUL. I hope I do, I have looked forward to it so much. I wrote the book in order to be jailed. I wanted the experience.

And why do you now suddenly think that I won't get there?

KONIK. The new liberal government, my boy!

PAUL. I wonder!

KONIK. How can you say "I wonder," you fool! One has to live up to one's ideals.

PAUL. Yes, that was what my "late" father-in-law used to say . . . a few months ago.

KONIK. Yes, by George, your father-in-law! Did he resign?

PAUL. Oh no! He is still "sitting" as tight as he can, as if he had glue on his trousers! Remember he is soon to celebrate his twenty-fifth anniversary— Now I suppose you are going to caricature the "ideals"!

KONIK. Are you crazy? I have done it already! [*Rises. Shows drawings.*] I'll show you all nine men of principle. [*Unrolls the cartoons he is carrying, rises, crosses to above PAUL.*]

PAUL. [*Bursts out laughing.*] I'm damned if I don't believe you will go to jail before I do.

MRS. KONIK. No he won't, for that drawing is not to be published.

PAUL. What do you mean?

KONIK. [*Embarrassed.*] The principal of my school wouldn't like it.

PAUL. What business is it of his?

MRS. KONIK. [*Joyfully.*] We had a talk with the principal yesterday and it will probably be fixed. 1500 crowns, a year's sure income! And you promised it for the sake of the children, Gerhard.

PAUL. Gerhard, Gerhard! That you, too, should allow yourself to be cowed! I could have sworn that you would not.

GERHARD. [*Sheepishly.*] If you had a wife hanging on to one coat-tail and four ill-bred children of both sexes hanging on to the other, then you, too, would . . .

PAUL. Never!—And I had so surely relied on you. . . . Now we two were to have taken a good whack at the "nice" people! [KONIK *crosses back to bed.*]

MRS. KONIK. Now don't sit there and make him feel sorry, Paul Abel. . . .

FREDERICK. [*Gliding in quietly from Mrs. TRUELSEN'S apartment. He carries a bunch of wild flowers and looks pretty tired and somewhat the worse for wear. From L. C. comes down C. Mrs. KONIK rises.*] How do you do? . . . Pardon me. . . . I came up through Mrs. Truelsen's. [PAUL *rises, crosses R. looks FREDERICK over.*]

KONIK. How do you do, Hamann? . . . Well, I see you have not failed Paul. I thank you for that! He is just complaining . . .

FREDERICK. Hell will freeze over before I fail Paul, Mr. Konik. How are you, Mrs. Konik?

PAUL. [*Turns FREDERICK around.*] My, my, what a sight you are! Have you slept in the woods all night?

FREDERICK. [*Handing him the flowers.*] They are for you. . . . I walked home from Elsinore, so I haven't had time to . . .

MRS. KONIK. *Walked* . . . From Elsinore?

KONIK. [*Still sheepishly.*] Have you become a royal courier?

FREDERICK. Ah, I wish I had, Mr. Konik, I love walking. . . . Ah, you ought to have seen the sun rise over the Sound this morning, Paul. . . . It was wonderful!

PAUL. Ahem. . . . But I don't suppose you got the position you were after?

FREDERICK. No. . . . Another brute had better recommendations. . . . But, I wanted to talk to you about that in private. . . . Goodness, I'm afraid I said something impolite, Mrs. Konik!

MRS. KONIK. Not at all, dear Mr. Hamann . . . we were just about to go.

FREDERICK. May I take a little glass of wine, Paul. It will strengthen me. [*Crosses below bed to KONIK.*]

MRS. KONIK. Let me help you. . . . [MRS. KONIK *crosses to wine L. FREDERICK follows her. Pours out the wine.*]

KONIK. [*After FREDERICK has crossed him.*] Don't you want a cigar?

FREDERICK. No thanks, I only smoke cigarettes. . . . [*Drags out some big, fat cigarettes and lights one.*]

KONIK. [*Aside to PAUL.*] Seems to me you are so short with him . . . it's a shame!

PAUL. But . . .

KONIK. No, it's a shame! You know how fond he is of you. . . . Has he "borrowed" anything recently?

PAUL. He has done worse than that.

KONIK. Splendid! And what was *that*?

PAUL. I can't tell you just now.

KONIK. Has he murdered his mother-in-law?

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Oh, no.

KONIK. What a pity; for I should love to know a murderer! Come along, Mother Lena, let's go home and be serious. [*MRS. KONIK crosses to him.*]

FREDERICK. [*To MRS. KONIK.*] Good-bye, Mrs. Konik. . . . There is no peace until the grave. [*MR. and MRS. KONIK exit D. R. with PAUL.*]

[*PAUL goes out with MR. and MRS. KONIK.*]

[*FREDERICK sits down thoughtfully in arm-chair L. C. His cigarette dies out.*]

PAUL [*Crossing from door D. R. comes in. Speaking severely, sits on bed L.*] How could you do such a thing, Freda? Run away from a hotel in the middle of the night without paying your bill? You are getting rather too funny!

FREDERICK. [*In a sickly tone.*] So you have heard about that already. . . .

PAUL. The police have been here.

FREDERICK. Have the police . . . ?

PAUL. How could you do such a thing? You must know that it won't do!

FREDERICK. But, dear Paul, I really didn't have any money. . . .

PAUL. Well, why the devil did you go to a hotel then?

FREDERICK. [*Puts both hands to his head, crosses up to table U.*

C.] Don't talk so loud. . . . May I take another little glass of wine? [*Pours wine and drinks.*]

PAUL. Well . . . ?

FREDERICK. Well—I was looking for a position, you know, and it always makes a good impression to stay at a good hotel. . . . And if I had got the position, then of course, I intended to ask for an advance and should have paid. . . .

PAUL. But now you tried to swindle.

FREDERICK. [*Puts both hands to his head again.*] I don't understand, Paul, how you, with your fine soul, can use such expressions. . . . "Swindle"? Why, I had written my right name in the book at the hotel.

PAUL. Yes, and another name besides!

FREDERICK. Oh, you know *that* too!

PAUL. What do you think Uncle Mathias would say, if he knew that you had posed as his son?

FREDERICK. Really, I don't think you ought to attack me for that, Paul. I did that to spare my parents' feelings. They have had enough trouble of late! Was it the police themselves that . . .

PAUL. Yes, a friend of mine sent me word on the quiet.

FREDERICK. That was really nice of him . . . What's the amount?

PAUL. 40 crowns . . . You did yourself pretty well.

FREDERICK. I had to eat like the others there. [*Hands to his head.*] And then I did need a glass of wine after the disappointment.

PAUL. The money must be paid by tomorrow noon.

FREDERICK. Must it . . . ?

PAUL. I haven't any to spare.

FREDERICK. Why, I never intended to ask you, Paul, you have

had enough trouble with me . . . But couldn't you just lend me the money till the middle of next week . . . ?

PAUL. [*Having for some time found it difficult to hide his amusement.*] Well, we can talk about that later . . . Now go in and fix yourself up a bit. You look as if you have slept in a ditch.

FREDERICK. [*Rises.*] That's just what I have . . . Out on the plain at the Hermitage . . . Oh, it was wonderful.

PAUL. All right, but go in and wash . . .

FREDERICK. [*Obediently.*] Yes . . . [*Crossing up C. towards bedroom.*] It's my early training that is at fault; mother spoiled me and father gave me the devil all the time . . . I shall never forget how sweet you have been, Paul. . . . I swear it. [*Goes into the bedroom, leaving the door open.*]

PAUL. [*Sitting on R. side of bed. After a pause.*] How's everything at your parents', Freda?

FREDERICK. [*Speaking from the bedroom—he is now quite at ease once more.*] Thanks, fine! Esther takes the matter calmly; she's not so sensitive as I am.

PAUL. You *don't* say so!

FREDERICK. [*Very amused.*] And father is about ready to support the new Government.

PAUL. The deuce he is!

FREDERICK. Yes, he is! But I believe it is mother who . . . You see his anniversary is so close.

PAUL. Yes, "Maria" has a healthy mind!

FREDERICK. Yes, and she has also made Esther comb her hair away from her forehead.

PAUL. [*Rises and sits on L. side of bed.*] Well, I'll be damned! I fought for three long years to make her do that! I suppose it is very becoming to her?

FREDERICK. Wonderfully, I tell you! But I believe they are getting a bit tired of her at home; she costs them money . . . and now they have me to. . . . And you don't earn anything . . .

PAUL. Not so far, no! . . . But it'll come.

FREDERICK. [*Coming down to PAUL in the doorway.*] I have something to tell you . . .

PAUL. From Esther?

FREDERICK. [*Above PAUL.*] No, she doesn't understand you . . . No-o, [*Squirming.*] it is from . . .

PAUL. [*Sitting on bed.*] Well? Don't stand there acting like a corkscrew!

FREDERICK. It's from Othella . . . Miss Lustig . . .

PAUL. So *you* are keeping up that acquaintance?

FREDERICK. [*Eagerly coming down to PAUL.*] I want to tell you, Paul, that I did not really learn to know her right until after *you* had left her!

PAUL. Aha!

FREDERICK. Goodness, yes. Of course I mean merely in a platonic manner! How beautiful and intelligent she is . . . And then she is only twenty-three years old.

PAUL. Very likely—for she was twenty-six when I met her.

FREDERICK. And how she loves you! She says that she never has loved anyone but you.

PAUL. No?

FREDERICK. And in a few minutes she's coming up here.

PAUL. [*Rising in dismay.*] What! Is she? Are you crazy?

FREDERICK. I met her down at the corner just now . . . She just ran home to put on her best clothes . . .

PAUL. Under no circumstances. I will not see her!

FREDERICK. Paul, it's a shame! You don't know how happy she was when I told her the other day that you were a bachelor once more and lived up here.

PAUL. [*L.*] And you told her that, you jackass!

FREDERICK. Yes . . . and it isn't good for you either to be alone in this way . . . [*Someone is heard knocking directly on the hall door.*] There she is. [*Goes out quickly.*]

PAUL. Freda. . . . [*Laughing, partly embarrassed. Crosses to L. of bed.*] Well, this is the limit!

FREDERICK. [*Comes in hand in hand with OTHELLA.*] Here she is . . . Isn't she lovely?

OTHELLA. [*Pretty and fresh, with golden, curly hair.*] Paul . . . I've come. [*Runs over, jumps on bed.*]

PAUL. Yes, my dear Othella, I am of course tremendously delighted to see you again, you aren't a day older, you haven't

changed a bit . . . And I am deeply touched by the thoughtfulness of dear Freda, but . . .

OTHELLA. [*Embracing PAUL.*] No "but," "but," "but." . . . [*Takes off hat and coat.*] Freda, please hang my things in the hall!

FREDERICK. Isn't she splendid! [*Goes out with the things.*]

PAUL. [*Leans against chair.*] My dearest Miss Lustig . . .

OTHELLA. Shut up, kid. I stay here this evening; and we are going to have a nice time, and then I shall clear out.

PAUL. [*Smiling, half conquered.*] You have kept your good nature [*FREDERICK comes back, crosses to table U. R. of bed C.*] . . . and your golden hair.

OTHELLA. [*Embracing him.*] Well, aren't you the least little bit glad to see me?

PAUL. [*Laughing breaks away from her.*] Not the least little bit!

OTHELLA. God! You don't even ask me how I have been?

PAUL. No, that's none of my business.

OTHELLA. Oh, you . . . ! [*Arranges pillows on bed.*] Freda, you must help me to re-arrange things; we want it just as it was in the old days! [*Sits down on the sofa and beckons.*] Paul . . . [*FREDERICK crosses back to chair below table U. R. C.*]

PAUL. No . . .

OTHELLA. Of course you will! Come on, now, come on . . .

PAUL. [*At L. of bed laughing.*] I won't come!

FREDERICK. It's really a shame, Paul!

OTHELLA. Oh, he'll come all right, Freda. [*To PAUL.*] Come on, come on, come on! [*PAUL walks slowly towards her.*] Sit down, sit down, sit down . . . !

PAUL. [*Crosses over to side of bed. Sits down and kisses her.*] Imp of the devil!

OTHELLA. [*Snuggling close to him.*] Aren't you glad that I came!

PAUL. No.

OTHELLA. Oh yes, you are; I can see it in your eyes! [*Kisses him—gets up.*]

FREDERICK. [*Aside to PAUL.*] Aren't you glad after all, Paul?

PAUL. You must get her away soon!

FREDERICK. Goodness!

PAUL. You must get her away from here soon or it will end badly.

OTHELLA. I hope it does—[*Rises, crosses L. C. FREDA follows her over L.*] Come on and help me, Freda! [*FREDERICK goes to help her.*] And then we're going to have one of our pleasant little suppers, Paul.

PAUL. Not at all!

OTHELLA. "Not at all"! You sound like a married man. [*Crosses back on bed.*] You never talked like that in the old days.

FREDERICK. O-oh, Paul, let's have a supper!

OTHELLA. Of course we're going to have supper! [*Spreads cloth on bed.*] I'll pay for it. [*Takes out her pocketbook.*] Freda, will you . . . ?

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] You devil! Come here, Freda, here's money. [*FREDERICK crosses R. side of bed.*]

OTHELLA. That's the way to treat you, you married man! [*Plucks out a couple of notes from PAUL's pocketbook.*] And now we must get hold of old Mrs. Truelsen . . . Just watch her face when she sees me! [*Presses an electric button. PAUL unconsciously tries to stop her, but he is too late. MRS. TRUELSEN comes in and stands like a pillar of salt when she sees OTHELLA, free and easy.*] How are you, Mrs. Truelsen; how have you been?

MRS. TRUELSEN. Splendid. [*Little pause.*]

OTHELLA. Thank you, I am splendid too! Now listen, dear Mrs. Truelsen, we're going to have a little party. Would you let us have some dishes and glasses and whatever else we may need?

MRS. TRUELSEN. If Mr. Abel wishes to take meals here then I am the one to make the arrangements, my dear Miss Lustig!

OTHELLA. No, Mrs. Truelsen, you're mistaken. From today I am at the wheel—Come along, Freda, let's see what's in the kitchen! [*FREDERICK goes out through THE WIDOW'S apartment. THE WIDOW and PAUL gaze at each other silently.* OTHELLA crosses to MRS. TRUELSEN. "Oh—my creampuff." *Exits after FREDERICK.*]

MRS. TRUELSEN. Are you a man?

PAUL. No!

MRS. TRUELSEN. And you said a little while ago . . .

PAUL. Yes . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. And now . . .

PAUL. Now she *is* here!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Chase her out!

PAUL. Can't do it, Mrs. Truelsen . . . haven't the heart to . . .
the girl is so happy . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. You need a nurse. Ha, ha . . . [*Turns and goes out D. L.*]

[*PAUL walks up and down the room, laughing—stretches out on the sofa. Someone knocks repeatedly at the hall door.*]

PAUL. [*Hearing it at last.*] Are there any more? Come right in!

[*MRS. KLUVER comes in. A little woman, dressed in black.*]

PAUL jumps up from the sofa, surprised.] Mrs. Kluver!

MRS. KLUVER.² [*Smiling.*] Herself, yes . . . I see you keep open house, dear Mr. Abel?

PAUL. [*Confused.*] You mean . . .

MRS. KLUVER. The outside door was wide open.

PAUL. Is that so . . . ? Someone must have forgotten to close it.

MRS. KLUVER. Evidently! Suppose you offer me a chair . . .

PAUL. Oh . . . I beg your pardon . . . I . . . [*Moves a chair over to her.*]

MRS. KLUVER. [*Sits down.*] You are so absent-minded, dear Mr. Abel . . . I hope I am not disturbing . . . ?

PAUL. [*Looks around for chair, then sits on floor at Mrs. KLUVER's feet.*] By no means . . . I must have been dozing . . . On the contrary. I am charmed to have you call.

MRS. KLUVER. Oh, you are? So "we" have moved?

PAUL. Yes, we . . . I have moved, yes . . . The apartment was too expensive.

MRS. KLUVER. So you have started learning economy?

PAUL. My fixed income has been reduced . . . I am no longer at the school.

MRS. KLUVER. Fired?

PAUL. Ye-es . . .

MRS. KLUVER. And Mrs. Abel. . . ?

PAUL. Mrs. Abel . . . well . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Perhaps she has *fired* you too?

PAUL. So you've heard that?

MRS. KLUVER. Yes, I know it. . . ! But don't let us waste time talking about that. I have come here to talk sense to you . . . In me you have a mother who will never forget your friendship for her poor son . . . [PAUL *kisses her hand.*] Tell me, my dear friend, now you are once more a free man, would you not like to enter a safe career? I have good connections and I should be glad to be able to do something for you.

PAUL. I know that, and . . .

MRS. KLUVER. For instance, how about becoming editor of "The Conservative"? The position will be vacant in January . . . and I can get it for you.

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] But, my dear Mrs. Kluver, that is the paper which has reviled me more than any other!

MRS. KLUVER. It would surely stop that when you became its editor.

PAUL. And my books . . .

MRS. KLUVER. You would of course have to stop writing books.

PAUL. [*By this time he has forgotten his other guests entirely.*] No, no, no; I should never agree to that! It is very good of you, but . . . And upon the whole I do not believe I am suited for a "safe" career.

MRS. KLUVER. And why not?

PAUL. I'm afraid I have too much gypsy blood in me . . . I should run away inside of a week . . . You can judge from my married life.

MRS. KLUVER. Your wife had a sour nature, my dear Abel! If you had taken my advice and married the jolly and light-hearted young girl I had picked out for you, and who would not have refused you, then all would probably have been well.

PAUL. [*Smiling.*] Yes, perhaps so . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Of course it would!—Every sensible person, even if he is a poet, when all is said and done, prefers to live in comfort.

PAUL. No!

MRS. KLUVER. You say "no!"

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] That's what I say!

MRS. KLUVER. Where ever did you get these radical ideas during the last few years? I suppose you eat fish with a knife now.

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] No-o!

MRS. KLUVER. Well, that is certainly *your* fault, my friend!
The whole hog or none!

PAUL. But surely, Mrs. Kluver, I cannot let a paper take away
my good name one day and join its staff the next!

MRS. KLUVER. Many honorable people have done that! The pay
to start with is 5,000 crowns a year and a bonus.

PAUL. I'll be hanged if I can do it! [*Rises.*]

MRS. KLUVER. Come now, young man!

PAUL. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Kluver, but I simply cannot—
in such matters I am somewhat of a "man of principle"!

MRS. KLUVER. [*Rising.*] Very well. Then we won't talk about
that any longer! I'm going, and in future Monsieur Abel may
paddle his own canoe . . . Good-bye. And if you *should*
decide to . . .

PAUL. [*Smiling.*] I'm not going to do it. I shall NOT do it.

MRS. KLUVER. Is that the "man of principle"?

PAUL. Yes!

MRS. KLUVER. [*Patting his cheek.*] You're a dear . . . but
you're a little fool.

PAUL. I am a poet and a portrayer of humanity!

MRS. KLUVER. Most poets are fools.

PAUL. Perhaps so . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Of course some people call them lyricists instead!

PAUL. Well, of course you are no . . . lyricist . . .

MRS. KLUVER. No, not with the kind of husband I have had!

Well, you still have a few months to think it over . . . By
the way: Beware of women now you are free! I know you
have a warm heart . . . Do you remember how enthusiastic
you were over the little Miss Lustig, who tried to learn cook-
ing at our house?

PAUL. [*Turning both hot and cold.*] Yes. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Whatever became of her?

PAUL. I . . . I . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Oh, perhaps you have lost track of her . . . I
remember she was with us at Rudersholm at the same time
as your remarkable brother-in-law. [OTHELLA'S and FRED-
ERICK'S *voices off-stage.*]

PAUL. May I take you to your carriage . . . ?

MRS. KLUVER. [PAUL offers her his arm and they go towards the door. Suddenly OTHELLA'S and FREDERICK'S happy voices are heard. They come in with various things for supper. When they see MRS. KLUVER they stop dead and become silent. MRS. KLUVER releases PAUL'S arm. Quite composed.] Aha, this is curious. The student of forestry and the student of cooking. [PAUL tries to speak.] No, you'd better keep your mouth shut, my friend. [To FREDERICK.] Well, you still remain at the capital, my dear Hamann?

FREDERICK. [Wiggling.] Yes, I . . . I love Copenhagen so much . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Then you really ought to get a job as forester in one of the summer gardens! [To OTHELLA.] And I see Mademoiselle Lustig still looks after the housekeeping . . . ? Well, good-bye children. [Goes towards the door. Crossing R. PAUL attempts to follow her. He wants to accompany her.] No, you remain here with your distinguished guests, my dear Mr. Abel! Have a good time. [Goes out. Pause. FREDERICK busying himself setting the table.]

OTHELLA. Ugh! That's the way it was at Rudersholm! We all felt cheap when she came into the kitchen . . . It's awful. [Sits on table.]

PAUL. [R. C.] I did not think you would feel things like that.

OTHELLA. [Embracing him.] Kiss me! Don't be so solemn! Kiss me, you idiot.

PAUL. [Shaking off his ill humour.] Oh, well! . . . what odds! [Hums.] The Lord caused the vine to grow so I suppose one ought to drink! [Kisses her.]

OTHELLA. What did she want anyhow?

PAUL. What business is it of yours, Mademoiselle Lustig?

OTHELLA. No, that's true. Oh! Paul if you only knew how I loved you. [Goes to the piano and plays a couple of bars from the overture to Tannhäuser.] Now for a good time!

FREDERICK. [Lights the lamp.] Tannhäuser! Do you remember, Paul, in the old days when Othella played Tannhäuser and you stretched out on the bed and I sat in the easy-chair . . . ? Goodness, how wonderful it was!—And then Othella would make signs to me to get out, as you wanted to be alone . . . how sweet it all was!

OTHELLA. [*Rising, crosses to PAUL on bed.*] Those days may come again, Freda . . . Isn't that so, Paul!

PAUL. O-oh yes. . . . !

[OTHELLA goes to help at the table.]

FREDERICK. Don't you think, Paul, that *she* would do something for me?

PAUL. Who?

FREDERICK. Why, Mrs. Kluver . . .

PAUL. You might try, little Freda; you are not bashful, you know.

OTHELLA. [*Still at piano.*] And she has plenty of money.

FREDERICK. I *have* written to her several times.

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] I might have guessed that! Freda writes to everybody.

OTHELLA. I know somebody who would give you a new dime!

FREDERICK. I wrote to him—he never answered.

PAUL. But Mrs. Kluver?

FREDERICK. She sent me fifty once and twenty-five another time.

OTHELLA. She's a dear anyhow!—How about having supper? Let's eat! [*On R. side of bed.*] You have no idea how I have been longing for you!

PAUL. Oh, I have an idea.

OTHELLA. Aren't you just the least little bit glad that I'm here?

PAUL. On the contrary, I am sick of you. Let's drink to our calling each other by our last names in future.

OTHELLA. Good! [*They drink.*]

FREDERICK. [*In arm-chair eating with great zest.*] Esther ought to see us now . . .

OTHELLA. What does Esther matter! Now it's *me*!

PAUL. But she is the "ideal" . . . You are merely flesh and blood.

OTHELLA. Thank Heaven for that!

FREDERICK. [*With a sigh.*] I have had a falling out with Valborg, Paul.

PAUL. Dear me . . .

OTHELLA. Is she "ideal" too?

PAUL. What has come between you?

FREDERICK. A preacher . . . She has heard some of his ser-

mons and now she says that I am leading a sinful life and she won't have anything to do with me any longer.

OTHELLA. I suppose she wants the preacher?

FREDERICK. That's it . . . But I shall take my revenge! I'm going to marry her mother instead. I swear I will.

OTHELLA. You are great, Freda! Here's to you!

PAUL. But you always said she hated you.

FREDERICK. Oh, that was only because I was such good friends with the daughter. She was jealous . . . You know women always admire me!

OTHELLA. Has she money?

FREDERICK. Lots! And Valborg won't get one cent dowry!

PAUL. Certainly not! And then you will become father-in-law to the preacher and father to your own fiancée! That's a position worthy of you!

FREDERICK. Yes, that sounds like a real fairy-tale!

PAUL. It certainly does, Freda! . . . [MRS. TRUELSEN *enters with a visiting card. To MRS. TRUELSEN.*] Here's to your health, Mrs. Truelsen! Won't you have a glass of wine?

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Stiffly.*] This gentleman rang the bell to my apartment, but it is Mr. Abel he wants.

PAUL. [*Taking the card.*] My lawyer . . . wonder what he wants this time of the day . . . Never mind! Let's grant him an audience.

MRS. TRUELSEN. But . . .

PAUL. Mrs. Truelsen! Tell him to come in.

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Opening the door.*] Come in, Mr. . . .

[*THE LAWYER comes in. THE WIDOW goes out.*]

PAUL. Good evening. What do you want with me?

THE LAWYER.³ I beg your pardon . . . I fear I am intruding . . . But I have just heard . . .

PAUL. Have I been sentenced? . . . I hope they didn't acquit me!

THE LAWYER. Can't we go . . .

PAUL. Speak out right here . . . these people are my best friends.

OTHELLA. Hullo, Jacobsen . . . !

THE LAWYER. Ah, now I see that it is Miss Othella . . . Miss

Lustig . . . ! Hello Miss Lustig. [*To PAUL.*] Yes, sentence has been pronounced and it amounts to one month's imprisonment on ordinary prison fare.

PAUL. That's fine!

OTHELLA. One month in prison!

FREDERICK. Goodness . . . and on ordinary prison fare!

THE LAWYER. Of course we shall appeal, Mr. Abel . . .

PAUL. Under no circumstances! Suppose they acquitted me?

THE LAWYER. [*Smiling.*] Yes, wouldn't that be a pity . . . But hadn't we better talk over that matter tomorrow, Mr. Abel?

PAUL. Of course we can do that . . . But I am as firm as a rock! It isn't an honour bestowed on everyone to go to jail.

THE LAWYER. [*Merrily.*] No! And a great many people wouldn't appreciate it.

PAUL. No . . . people are so petty.

THE LAWYER. That's so! Well, until tomorrow then, Mr. Abel . . . [*Bows, and goes towards the door.*]

OTHELLA. [*Waves her hand to him.*] Good-bye, Jacobsen . . . !

THE LAWYER. Good-bye, Miss Lustig. [*Goes out accompanied by PAUL.*]

OTHELLA. A month's imprisonment . . . and just as we had got together again!

FREDERICK. Thank Heaven, I have never had any trouble with the police!

[*PAUL comes in.*]

OTHELLA. [*Runs over and embraces him.*] Take me with you, Paul!

PAUL. My lady, unfortunately it is against the regulations!

FREDERICK. I hereby offer to go to jail in your place.

PAUL. That's certainly nice of you, Freda, but remember you have to go and propose to your mother-in-law.

FREDERICK. Oh, she may go to hell.

PAUL. Don't trifle with the eternal verities! But pour out the wine, children, and . . . and then go home to sleep. Drink to my good looks . . . luck . . .

OTHELLA. [*Embracing PAUL.*] Let us stay a little half hour more anyhow . . . only twenty minutes . . . ?

PAUL. All right! But then you will have to leave.

OTHELLA. [*Nestles closer, then pushes him away.*] And now for the parting treat! I'm going to play for you . . . Tannhäuser.
[*Begins to play.*]

FREDERICK.⁴ As it was in the beginning!

[*FREDERICK sinks into a chair. PAUL stretches out on the sofa.*

OTHELLA, *plays—looks at PAUL and sees that his eyes are closed—then she nods to FREDERICK that he is to go out.*

FREDERICK *doesn't want to go but at last goes out softly, looking insulted. OTHELLA continues playing.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

A single cell in the jail—square with yellow-plastered walls and arched ceiling.

To the left two planks built into the wall and serving as chair and table. Above the table a lighted gaslight.

In the background, fastened to the wall with hinges, a bed which in day-time is closed up against the wall and locked. Over the bed, close to the ceiling, a square, grated window, arched at the top. To the right towards the foreground a door with peephole from the corridor outside the cell. In the corner towards the background a washbowl with water-pipe.

Morning.

PAUL.¹ [*In his ordinary clothes, elbows on the table and head resting in his hands. On the table a tin mug. He hums softly.*]

Ach, Du lieber Augustine, Augustine, Augustine . . . Well, well, well . . . [*Yawns and stretches himself.*]

[*From outside is heard the rattle of a bunch of keys. A key is inserted in the lock, the door half opened and the voice of JAILER is heard from the outside.*]

THE JAILER.² Breakfast!

[*PAUL takes his mug and sticks it out through the half open door; gets it back filled with warm beer and also gets a hunk of pumpernickel, cut into thick slices. Goes back to his seat and starts eating, but without appetite. In a few moments the bunch of keys is once more heard rattling and THE JAILER comes in followed by a YOUNG FELLOW in prison garb—grey trousers and short jacket, white woolen socks, and slippers, broom and dustpan in hand. The two prisoners look each other over.*]

PAUL. That's a new one. . . .

THE JAILER. [*Turning out the gas.*] Yes, No. 87 has the belly-ache . . . The devil only knows from what! [*To THE PRISONER.*] First make the bed and then sweep . . . but get a move on you.

[THE PRISONER *whose throat is wound with cotton under a large muffler, gets busy with the bed.*]

PAUL. Hasn't an easy-chair arrived for me, Mr. Siverts?

THE JAILER. Yes . . . and tomorrow I suppose you will get a chaise longue and a billiard table! [*Goes without locking the door.*]

THE PRISONER.³ [*Whispering hoarsely to PAUL.*] What you done?

PAUL. [*Without hesitation.*] Forgery.

THE PRISONER. [*Clacking his tongue.*] You're it, pal!

PAUL. And what've you done?

THE PRISONER. Nothing . . . I am here on suspicion.

PAUL. What's the matter with your throat?

THE PRISONER. I have the mumps . . . Haven't you any "candy" on you?

PAUL. Candy . . . ? Hush!

[THE PRISONER *gets busy making the bed.*]

THE JAILER. [*Brings in a big, old-time easy-chair and some letters.*] Here's the chair . . . and here's a bunch of letters.

PAUL. Thank you . . . [*Begins at once opening the letters.*]

THE JAILER. [*Sitting down in the chair.*] You're too slow, 76!

THE PRISONER. [*Humbly.*] All right, Mr. Siverts, I'll hurry up . . .

THE JAILER. Yes, you'll have to hurry!

THE PRISONER. Very well . . . [*Finishes making the bed.*]

THE JAILER. [*Gets up, closes up the bed and locks it to the wall.*] Then the floor, 76 . . . but get a move on you!

THE PRISONER. All right, Mr. Siverts . . . [*Starts sweeping furiously.*]

[THE JAILER *goes out.* PAUL *reads some letters.* PRISONER *sits down in the easy-chair.*] . . . Ha!

PAUL. [*Reading.*] Help yourself . . .

THE PRISONER. [*Stretches himself.*] It's some time since I had such a comfortable seat . . .

[PAUL *laughs at something in the letter.*]

THE PRISONER. You must be a blooming aristocrat to have kept your own clothes and to get a chair and letters and chambermaid . . .

PAUL. Get up a moment!

THE PRISONER. [*Impudently.*] No, I won't!

PAUL. Get up, I say, and I'll show you something . . .

[THE PRISONER *gets up unwillingly.*]

PAUL. [*Takes out his penknife and quickly cuts a hole in the cover of the chair.*] Look here! [*Pulls out a small parcel from the chair.*] Here's chewing tobacco, comrade!

THE PRISONER. [*Clacking his tongue.*] Well, I'll be damned!

PAUL. They told me about it in the letter.

THE PRISONER. Give us a mouthful.

PAUL. Of course! [*Gives him a chew.*] But be sure to hide it!

THE PRISONER. That's the worst thing to do without here. [*Chewing hungrily.*] And then women! [*Hides the chew in one of his socks. Then goes to the water-pipe and "tele-graphs".*]

PAUL. [*Who also is chewing.*] What are you doing?

THE PRISONER. I'm telling the pals that we have "candy". . . .

Can't you hear how happy they are?

[*Telegraphic reply is heard in the pipe.*]

PAUL. Seems to me you are very humble to the warden, 76 . . .

THE PRISONER. Huh, yes . . . Though I have the mumps I'm not an idiot . . . I know how to handle them . . . then one gets a bit of sugar with the beer!

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] So that's why you are so humble!

THE PRISONER. That's what it is . . . ! But just let me meet that cossack some dark night in the street when he's alone . . . [*Clacks his tongue.*] Bing . . . Sun, moon and eleven stars . . . Joseph's dream and Potiphar will dance right before his eyes.

PAUL. Hush, there he comes!

[THE PRISONER *sweeps vigorously.*]

THE JAILER. [*Comes in.*] Have you finished, 76?

THE PRISONER. Ready, Mr. Siverts . . .

THE JAILER. All right, come along!

[THE PRISONER *gathers his things together.*]

PAUL. [*Slyly.*] Have you the toothache, 76? One of your cheeks is swollen.

THE PRISONER. [*In the same tone.*] When a poor fellow has the mumps, comrade . . .

THE JAILER. Hold your jaw.

THE PRISONER. Yes sir . . .

THE JAILER. Forward, march!

THE PRISONER. Yes, sir . . .

THE JAILER. [*Calls out through the door.*] Jensen, put 76 in!

JENSEN. [*Outside.*] All right.

[THE PRISONER *goes out.*]

THE JAILER [*Changing his demeanour entirely.*] Well, Mr.

Abel, how did we sleep last night? But you haven't eaten anything, Mr. Abel . . .

PAUL. [*Points to his throat.*] It won't slide down any further than that.

THE JAILER. Wash it down with the beer!

PAUL. Oh, Siverts, I had such a lovely dream last night about fried chicken!

THE JAILER. Well, dreaming about it won't make you fat!

PAUL. Couldn't you get me a chicken, eh? . . . with a lot of gravy.

THE JAILER. [*Laughs.*] Ha, ha!

PAUL. Just a little one, Siverts?

THE JAILER. Where the devil would I get that from, man?—

But as I have told you before, Mr. Abel, why do you write the kind of stuff that you have to go to the pen for?

A man with your talent ought to be able to write whatever he wants and make money out of it!

PAUL. Yes, but I am a lyricist, Siverts.

THE JAILER. Yes, that's what you are! And you're married, too, they tell me.

PAUL. Ye-es, in a way . . .

THE JAILER. Have you any children?

PAUL. Eleven or twelve . . .

THE JAILER. That's going some! And you look so innocent.

PAUL. But I did not have all of them with the same wife.

THE JAILER. No-o, I didn't think you did . . . I have been married twice myself and have seven children— But now I am a widower, glory be.

PAUL. Both *my* wives are still alive.

THE JAILER. Then you are a bigamist!

PAUL. Hush! Don't talk about it.

THE JAILER. No, mum's the word . . .

PAUL. Tell me, Siverts, what do you really think about women?

THE JAILER. That depends largely upon what you happen to get hold of, Mr. Abel! Women are peculiar birds; they aren't like us men at all . . .

PAUL. No, that's the trouble with marriage, Siverts, that one has to be of the opposite sex! How were *your* two wives?

THE JAILER. The first was a little, round one, who cried if she happened to lose a needle . . . The other one was a tall, three-cornered devil, who would fight whenever she felt that way . . . I have noticed that number two always is the worse . . . It's peculiar that a man hasn't sense enough to keep from getting mixed up again, when he has been lucky enough to escape with his life the first round.

PAUL. Yes, and at that some people marry three times, Siverts.

THE JAILER. Yes, it must be a sort of fever . . . How were *your* two?

PAUL. One was hunchbacked and redhaired . . . The other one was deaf and dumb and with wooden legs.

THE JAILER. Both legs?

PAUL. Yes, both legs!

THE JAILER. Ha, ha, ha! I must admire you, Mr. Abel, you have a sense of humour.

PAUL. Same to you, Siverts!

THE JAILER. Aw, me . . . I am only a common person! But *you* are the fine, well-bred gentleman, who has condescended to have a bit of fun with a fellow like me. That's what cheers me up!

PAUL. I am glad of that . . .

THE JAILER. Yes, it's like a real comic show for us when a man like you comes in here. Why, I wish that *you* were here for life, Mr. Abel!

PAUL. Oh, that is very kind of you, Siverts, but don't you think that I should lose my good spirits in that case?

THE JAILER. [*Eagerly.*] Well, when I had her—the tall three-cornered one [*Breaks off at this point.*] . . . The Pastor is coming.

PAUL. What does that insistent person want here again? I shall never get my nap now.

THE JAILER. You ought to repent right away, Mr. Abel, then he does not stay so long.

PAUL. You can bet your life I shall repent!

THE JAILER. [*Straightens up.*] Here he is!

[THE PASTOR *comes in*, THE JAILER *goes out.*]

THE PASTOR.⁴ How-do-you-do, Mr. Paul Abel . . . ! [PAUL *bows silently.*] Aha, I see we have a grandfather's chair here! [*Sits down in it and makes himself comfortable.*]

PAUL. [*Ironically.*] Won't you sit down, Mr. Pastor?

THE PASTOR. [*Not understanding the irony.*] Thank you . . . of course they are not so particular here with the prisoners of Mr. Abel's kind; they are treated leniently.

PAUL. Yes. [*Pause.*]

THE PASTOR. I saw you in church last Sunday . . .

PAUL. Yes.

THE PASTOR. Did you want to see what divine service would look like in here?

PAUL. Yes . . . and I wanted to hear you preach.

THE PASTOR. I suppose you didn't like it?

PAUL. No.

THE PASTOR. [*Smiling.*] I thought so. [*Pause.*] How does life in here agree with you?

PAUL. Thanks, excellently.

THE PASTOR. I don't suppose your stay here will cause any change in your literary ideas?

PAUL. Hardly.

THE PASTOR. According to your ideas you probably believe you have been treated unjustly?

PAUL. Oh, I don't know . . .

THE PASTOR. Tell me, my dear friend, what do you really expect to accomplish by writing the way you do?

PAUL. I want to show you people, as you *really* are.

THE PASTOR. Thanks, but we know that already.

PAUL. I haven't any strong impression that you do.

THE PASTOR. Don't you really think that you would benefit "us people" and the world more by holding some ideal or other before us? By pointing out to us according to the best of your ability how we ought to be?

PAUL. I am not wise enough for that.

THE PASTOR. [*Delicately.*] Or foolish enough!

PAUL. Ye-es, you might perhaps put it that way.

THE PASTOR. Can you support yourself by your literary activities?

PAUL. No.

THE PASTOR. Why don't you select a profession?

PAUL. I'm too old.

THE PASTOR. How old are you?

PAUL. Two hundred and forty-eight years. [THE PASTOR *looks up surprised*. PAUL *goes over to him quietly; buttonholes him and lifts him from the chair—and sits down in it himself.*] And how old are you, Mr. Pastor?

THE PASTOR. [*Confused.*] Thirty-eight . . .

PAUL. And how do you like your job?

THE PASTOR. [*Protesting.*] But, Mr. Abel, I . . .

PAUL. Do you have late dinner?

THE PASTOR. Mr . . .

PAUL. Do you use woollen underwear?

THE PASTOR. Mr. Abel, I must . . .

PAUL. [*Getting a sudden inspiration.*] I wonder if it's you who are engaged to Valborg Swanshield?

THE PASTOR. [*Taken by surprise.*] How do you know?

PAUL. I am clairvoyant— She has oodles of money, hasn't she?

THE PASTOR. Mr. Abel, I must insist . . .

PAUL. [*Calmly.*] No, *now* it is my turn, Mr. Pastor, to be an indiscreet interviewer! Have your parents been married several times? Does your mother wear patent leather shoes? Does your father like fresh lobster or does he prefer it canned?

THE PASTOR. [*Pale.*] I come here in the course of my official duties, Mr. Abel, and I protest most vigorously against your incredible manner of . . .

[THE PASTOR *goes out quickly and outside the door runs into HAMANN.*]

HAMANN.⁵ I am Mr. Thomas Hamann . . .

THE PASTOR. And I am the prison clergyman . . . [*Goes away.*]

PAUL. [*Gets up in surprise.*] My father-in-law . . . ! You here! I hope it is merely on suspicion!

THE JAILER. I shall call you when the fifteen minutes are up, sir. [*Goes out.*]

HAMANN. [*Who has a decoration in his buttonhole—a trifle uncertain.*] Good morning, dear Paul . . .

PAUL. [*Shakes hands with him—merrily.*] Good morning and welcome, sir! How in the world have you managed to get into this Chinese puzzle?

HAMANN. I have obtained the special permission of the Cabinet Minister. And you, dear friend, have retained your good spirits, I am happy to hear.

PAUL. [*Seriously.*] Well, it's no use taking life any other way.

HAMANN. You're right in that . . . but unfortunately so few people realize it—My wife and daughter wish to be remembered to you.

PAUL. Many thanks! Please remember me to them. My, but you look young and sprightly.

HAMANN. Yes, don't I? But a wave of rejuvenation has spread all over the country, Paul!

PAUL. Yes, I've heard that you have become a "liberal"—And you have received a decoration! All that of course goes together.

HAMANN. [*Fingering his decoration.*] Yes. Twenty-five years' faithful service.

PAUL. And nothing came of the resignation you threatened to send in?

HAMANN. No; thank God I still submit to the law of evolution! You live quite comfortably here.

PAUL. Oh, yes . . .

HAMANN. Did I bring you the regards of the ladies? I was to do that.

PAUL. Thanks, and I asked to be remembered to them in turn.

HAMANN. [*Confused.*] Ah, yes, I remember now . . . And you have an easy-chair! Do they have one like that in all the . . . rooms?

PAUL. I don't know . . . You see we haven't much chance for sociability . . . This isn't exactly the place for social gatherings.

HAMANN. No-o, ha, ha! Perhaps it has been specially sent you by our new liberal government in order to soften somewhat your scandalous sentence.

PAUL. No, my friend Gerhard Konik sent it to me.

HAMANN. Oh, the caricaturist . . . He's a fine fellow!

PAUL. Yes.

HAMANN. I saw him on the street the other day.

PAUL. Without his wife?

HAMANN. No, no, the idea! Of course they are a bit ridiculous, those two, with their old-time faithfulness . . . but what the devil, ha, ha!

PAUL. No, what the hell, hee-hee!

HAMANN. But one ought to *remain* together . . . for the sake of the example.

PAUL. But they are doing that. But then of course they are merely a couple of caricaturists.

HAMANN. [*Without comprehension.*] Yes— And all three of us agreed it was a shame to have you here.

PAUL. [*Behind a chair.*] Mr. Hamann, when one disobeys the laws, then . . .

HAMANN. Disobey, disobey . . . What does it mean! After all is said and done, it is this "disobedience" that produces all progress!

PAUL. Mr. Hamann, I see that you have become a real anarchist!

HAMANN. I've always been that!

PAUL. Oh?

HAMANN. Yes, deep down in my soul.

PAUL. It must have been very deep . . . Well, you see, deep down in my soul I have always been a reactionary. . . .

HAMANN. [*Laughs loudly.*] Ha, ha, ha! What a sense of humour you have.

PAUL. [*Seriously.*] I beg your pardon, Mr. Hamann . . . I am quite serious! I feel that the new ways may be all right but not until they become old and are safe.

HAMANN. [*Laughing.*] Didn't I say you were kidding me? You are merely quoting one of my old stupidities!

PAUL. [*Still serious.*] Oh, was it you who used to say that! I thought it was Napoleon Bonaparte . . . after he became

emperor— However, this was what I was going to tell you: My old protector, Mrs. Kluver, has offered me the post as editor-in-chief of "The Conservative." . . . She is one of the biggest shareholders . . . and I have accepted her offer.

HAMANN. [*With satisfaction.*] I had heard something about it. [*With fervor.*] To think that you betray your convictions to such an extent!

PAUL. Yes, the truth will prevail!

HAMANN. [*Beginning to get puzzled.*] The truth? Which truth?

PAUL. That sooner or later one harkens to the call of one's inner soul.

HAMANN. Yes . . . Yes, of course. . . . ! Does that position pay you well?

PAUL. Yes, very nicely; 7,000 a year and bonus.

HAMANN. 7,000 for a man's convictions . . . ! Well, that's fair enough.

PAUL. Isn't that so?

HAMANN. To be sure. Even though people, of course, will talk . . . And you with your modern views can do so much good in that position; you can fill the old winebottle with fresh blood, ha, ha!

PAUL. Yes, isn't that so?

HAMANN. To be sure! I congratulate you heartily, old man! My wife and daughter will be glad to know that the rumour was right.

PAUL. Where did you hear the rumour?

HAMANN. I saw it in some newspaper, and then my womenfolk felt that I ought to go to see you right away . . . But personally I am a bit sorry, dear Paul, that we no longer belong to the same political party.

PAUL. We never did, because formerly *you* stood on the foundation of truth . . .

HAMANN. [*With emphasis.*] On the foundation of truth? I did not stand there till now.

PAUL. Maybe so . . . But then I stand there *too* . . . Don't you understand *that*?

HAMANN. No, because . . . the truth is . . .

PAUL. The truth is only one thing . . .

HAMANN. Ye-es, yes! But we stand . . .

PAUL. [*With fervor.*] Certainly! But the truth is what is deepest in our heart of hearts! You will not deny that?

HAMANN. No, of course not . . . By no means . . . ! But we stand. [*Stupidly.*] Allow me to sit down for a moment? [*Sits down in the easy-chair.*]

THE JAILER. [*Comes in.*] The fifteen minutes are up . . .

HAMANN. [*Jumps up frightened.*] But, my dear Abel, we haven't talked at all about what the ladies told me to . . .

PAUL. Just two minutes more, Siverts . . . [THE JAILER goes out.] Is it about Esther, Mr. Hamann?

HAMANN. [*Joyfully.*] Yes, that's just the gist of the matter! And to think that you could guess it!

PAUL. [*Deeply serious.*] What the Gods have put asunder, let no man join together!

HAMANN. Of course not, but . . . such a little disagreement. . . .

PAUL. Impossible! In the position I am to fill in the future I cannot be married to the daughter of a Kropotkin . . . an anarchist! But I want to ask you a favour . . .

HAMANN. [*Full of expectation.*] With great pleasure . . . !

PAUL. Let's call each other Thomas and Paul?

HAMANN. [*Hesitating.*] Why, er-er. . . .

PAUL. Yes, because now you are a liberal, it's more democratic.

HAMANN. [*Feeling foolish.*] Why, of course. . . .

PAUL. [*Squeezes his hand.*] Thank you . . . from the bottom of my heart! You may come in now, Siverts. [THE JAILER comes in.] Good-bye, dear Thomas, and thanks for your kind visit!

HAMANN. But . . . the ladies . . .

PAUL. Good-bye, good-bye, dear Thomas! [To THE JAILER.] Please let the gentleman out. . . .

THE JAILER. [*Guiding the CHIEF CLERK. In the doorway.*] Jensen, please deliver this gentleman to Simonsen!

JENSEN. [*Outside.*] Right you are. . . .

[PAUL sinks into the easy-chair, laughing.]

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

PAUL ABEL's bachelor apartment—forenoon. OTHELLA sitting at the piano playing *Tannhäuser*, HUGO JORGENSEN, in a cycling suit, is lying on the bed. He is puffing cigarettes and in front of him is a smoking-table with whiskey and soda.

JORGENSEN [*Stretched out in bed.*] What the hell is that ding-donging Tella. . . . Can't you play something decent? . . . I am used to better music at the racetracks. [OTHELLA changes into an operetta tune.] Fine! Some tune to that! OTHELLA keeps on playing.] I hope nobody cops me steed; I left it in the lower hall!

OTHELLA. [*Playing.*] Oh no, this is a respectable house. . . .

JORGENSEN. Please go down and see, will you . . . ?

OTHELLA. All right . . . [*Goes out through the hall R.*]

[JORGENSEN yawns.]

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Comes in from her apartment with some flowers—stops.*] Ahem!

JORGENSEN. [*Nods.*] Hello, old lady! [MRS. TRUELSEN gazes at him, enraged.] Flowers for Tella, eh . . . ? [MRS. TRUELSEN throws flowers on chair L. C.]

[OTHELLA is heard humming out in the hall.]

[MRS. TRUELSEN goes out after a silent struggle with herself.]

JORGENSEN. Solong solong, old lady . . . ! [*After her exit.*] Old crab!

OTHELLA. [*Comes in.*] Sure your bicycle was there. . . . And in any case it was locked . . . ! [*On her knees beside the chaise longue.*] Oh, Hugo, you have no idea how I have longed for you! [JORGENSEN patting her hair indifferently.] Aren't you a bit glad that you have me back again?

JORGENSEN. Certainly!

OTHELLA. Kiss me!

JORGENSEN. There you are. . . .

OTHELLA. You're right out of the barrel, you are!

JORGENSEN. Whose is this wigwam anyhow, Tella?

OTHELLA. It's my brother's; I've told you that already.

JORGENSEN. Well! But the card on the door reads "Paul Abel".

OTHELLA. [*Without hesitating.*] Yes, for he is only my half-brother.

JORGENSEN. Of course! But suppose he came?

OTHELLA. But he isn't coming . . . ! He is away on a vacation.

You see, he is a poet. . . . Don't you know the name?

JORGENSEN. I don't know all the bums what write. . . .

OTHELLA. But I expect him this afternoon. . . . He telegraphed me from Berlin. . . . So you have to go immediately after lunch.

JORGENSEN. Of course; you cannot have twins. . . .

OTHELLA. [*Laughs loudly.*] . . . Was there much fun in Paris?

JORGENSEN. I finished rotten. . . . Got a puncture at the last turn. . . . So both Mullertz and Torquay passed me.

OTHELLA. Weren't you furious?

JORGENSEN. Certainly!

OTHELLA. Oh, you're grand when you are furious! But why haven't you written me at all?

JORGENSEN. When you are training you don't think of women or liquor. . . .

OTHELLA. But now you're going to stay in town a long while, aren't you?

JORGENSEN. Three months. . . . Give us a high-ball.

OTHELLA. [*Fixing the drink at table R. beside bed.*] And I'll have you all to myself?

JORGENSEN. Of course!—What have you been doing while I was away?

OTHELLA. I have been sitting home sewing and longing so terribly for you. See how thin I have become! [*Stretching out an arm to him.*] Feel. . . .

JORGENSEN. [*Feeling her arm.*] I have felt thinner ones. . . .

OTHELLA. [*Pulling his ear.*] You big bum!

JORGENSEN. Come off! Come off!

OTHELLA. Oh, Hugo, no man can understand what a woman suffers, when the only one she loves leaves her time after

time! She does not feel sure of him when there are so many, many miles between them.

JORGENSEN. Of course you women are more reliable, eh?

OTHELLA. I swear, Hugo, that I have been faithful to you! [*A key is heard in the hall door.*]

JORGENSEN. Someone is coming. . . .

OTHELLA. Oh, that's only Mrs. Truelsén. . . . Hugo you're not as glad as I am because we are together again! Sometimes I have sat and cried with longing for you. . . .

PAUL. [*Comes in from the hall—Sees the couple and stops.*]
Beg your pardon, I am intruding. . . .

OTHELLA. Paul! Is it you? This early! Welcome . . . ! [*Embracing him. PAUL frees himself quietly.*] This is my cousin, the well-known cyclist, Hugo Jorgensen. . . . He has just arrived from the races in Paris, as you no doubt have read in the papers. . . . [*PAUL doesn't reply.*]

JORGENSEN. [*Somewhat at sea.*] Hugo Jorgensen, yes. [*Rises from bed. L. side of it.*] Maybe the gentleman is Tella's brother, Paul Abel . . . ? So we're slightly related. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes, that's to say. . . . Oh, yes, that's Paul Abel. . . . [*PAUL stands quietly enjoying the situation without replying.*]

JORGENSEN. [*Plucking up courage.*] . . . To be sure. Of course it's easily understood. Nothing but lies! I've had to do with women before today. . . . You, too, I suppose?

OTHELLA. Paul you mustn't believe anything bad about me, I . . . [*Sobs.*] Oh, I know appearances are against me. . . . [*Throws herself on bed.*]

JORGENSEN. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Tears!! [*PAUL remains silent.*] [*Bows.*] Well-bred gent to deal with. . . . I am honoured! Deaf and dumb! Poet. . . . Only expresses himself through his pen! But it's your own private home, Mr. Abel; I therefore leave you the lady and the battlefield. . . . [*Takes his cap.*] G'bye . . . gents only use spiritual weapons! G'bye, Tella! 147 4th floor, you know. . . . I keep open house as usual, of course, after due notice. . . . Good-bye! [*Goes out. PAUL bursts out laughing.*]

OTHELLA. [*Rises from bed, crosses to PAUL'S L. Laughs loudly,*

getting courage.] Yes, what d'ye say, Paul? Hee-hee! Isn't he great?

PAUL. Gorgeous!

OTHELLA. [*Taking PAUL's arm.*] You're not angry with me because . . .

PAUL. Not in the least! For he must be irresistible! But for that reason you ought to get your things together and follow him.

OTHELLA. Then you're mad with me after all, Paul?

PAUL. Not at all, my dear Othella; it takes more than that!¹

[OTHELLA *crosses L. of bed.*] But do as I told you.

OTHELLA. Yes. . . . But, [*Shyly crosses to R. of bed.*] Oh, Paul, I had so looked forward to your coming home!

PAUL. Of course! I think your clothes are hanging in the hall. . . .

OTHELLA. Don't you want me to tidy up a bit in here before I go?

PAUL. No thanks. . . .

OTHELLA. And I was going to play so nicely for you . . . !

PAUL. [*Still calmly.*] Go on now, little Miss Lustig. . . .

OTHELLA. [*Crossing R.*] All right, if you insist. . . . [*Goes towards the hall. Back to R. of bed.*] Do you know that Freda is engaged to his widow lady?

PAUL. Yes, he wrote and told me.

OTHELLA. He hasn't been here since, but I met him on the street the other day and he pretended he didn't know me. . . . He has become so aristocratic!

PAUL. Your coat is hanging on the hook to the right. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes. [*Crosses R. goes out, bangs door, returns immediately. Goes out and comes back with hat and coat.*] When may I come to see you again, Paul?

PAUL. I think we had better say: never, little Othella.

OTHELLA. Oh, Paul. . . . [*Sobs, coming R. C.*]

PAUL. No weeping . . . !

OTHELLA. All right. . . .

PAUL. That's it. . . . And here's your bag. [*Crosses to her R.*]

OTHELLA. Thanks. . . . [*Takes a powder puff from her pocket and powders.*] I can't go on the street looking like a cry-baby.

PAUL. No, I suppose not. . . .

OTHELLA. Let me play something from Tannhäuser for you . . . for the last time?

PAUL. No. No, little Othella. . . . Good-bye then.

OTHELLA. Well, good-bye then. . . .

PAUL. . . . And be good to yourself!

OTHELLA. Thank you. . . . [*Embracing him.*] Ah, Paul, you're the nicest man I have ever known!

PAUL. Wel-l, you must go now. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes. . . . [*Goes out suddenly and quickly R.*]

PAUL. It's too bad—the poor kid . . . ! But tomorrow she'll once more be Othella the golden haired! [*Goes over and presses the electric button to MRS. TRUELSEN'S apartment—As no one comes he opens the door and calls.*] Mrs. Truelsen!

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*L. Comes in, quite flustered.*] Almighty Heaven, is it *you*, Mr. Abel?

PAUL. [*Smiling.*] Yes.

MRS. TRUELSEN. But you wrote that you were not to be here until the afternoon! And look at the way the place looks! I have a bunch of flowers for you. [*Goes out and returns with the flowers.*] Here you are . . . and God bless you!

PAUL. Same to you, Mrs. Truelsen!—But you seem so feverish . . . !

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Busy fixing up the room.*] Where are the others?

PAUL. Which others?

MRS. TRUELSEN. She, Lustig . . . and that creature!

PAUL. Gone!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Gone?

PAUL. Yes. . . . Gone on their beautiful legs down the stairs, out on the street and away. . . . But try to compose yourself a bit, dear Mrs. Truelsen!

MRS. TRUELSEN. I *can't*! [*Sits in arm-chair. Bursts out.*] You have no idea how I have suffered during this miserable month, Mr. Abel! She has led me around by the nose! I haven't had any peace at all in my own house. I have thought of police and suicide! I've been ready to run away from the whole darn boarding house. . . . You men folks have no idea how mean we women can be to one another!

PAUL. But now the trouble is over, Mrs. Truelsen. . . . Miss Lustig has moved to other hunting grounds.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Well, then someone else will come, now you have been . . . a . . . widower so long.

PAUL. [*Smiling.*] No . . . at least not for the present. This afternoon I'm going out in the country to stay a couple of weeks to drink sweet milk and eat fresh air.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Are you going to rush away again immediately, Mr. Abel! I had looked forward so much to making things comfortable for you [*Rising suddenly.*] And it got much worse when she dragged that fellow in here, that cyclist! What have you done with him? Have you killed him?

PAUL. Yes . . . and stuck him up in the chimney; we don't have to use it for a while anyhow.

MRS. TRUELSEN. There he would lie on the bed stretching out his disgusting legs. . . .

PAUL. Oh well, he's gone away on them now.

MRS. TRUELSEN. And she would dance around him like a peacock and fill him with your whiskey and your cigars, and . . . I saw it all through the keyhole and . . . [*Sits again in arm-chair.*] but now we won't talk any more about *that*!

PAUL. No . . . that's agreed!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Will you have some lunch?

PAUL. You can bet I will! I haven't tasted real food since my . . . funeral!

MRS. TRUELSEN. The bell's ringing! [*Goes out and comes back soon after with GERARD KONIK. Crossing to L.*] There he is, Mr. Konik! But think of it, he is going away again this afternoon! Well, I must go out and get the lunch! [*Goes out.*]

PAUL. Good morning, dear Gerhard! You see I have come back to life!

KONIK. [*Deeply serious and depressed.*] I congratulate you on your resurrection, dear friend. . . .

PAUL. Thank you . . . ! And thanks for the chair! You can't imagine how beautifully I slept in it. . . . And the dreams I had! And the chewing tobacco, oh my! That was an original idea. What joy it caused all over the "sanitorium"!—But where is your sister-in-arms?

KONIK. [*Bending his head.*] My sister-in-arms?

PAUL. Yes, your wife? You look so odd. . . . She isn't sick?

KONIK. I don't know. . . .

PAUL. [*Seizes his arm. Frightened.*] What's the matter, man? You don't know?

KONIK. No. . . . Lena and I haven't anything to do with each other any more. . . .

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Impossible! Hell would sooner freeze over, as my brother-in-law, Freda, used to say!

KONIK. Lena has left me. . . .

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] That's a lie!

KONIK. She's run away with a real painter. . . .

PAUL. Lies! I don't believe them!

KONIK. I wasn't "serious" enough for her. . . .

PAUL. [*Shaking him.*] You lie, Gerhard!

KONIK. And of course I didn't want to stand in the way of her happiness. . . .

PAUL. [*Confused.*] But, man, you can't live without your wife, you can't work, you can't draw. . . .

KONIK. Yes, I *can* draw . . . Let me show you . . . [*Takes out a sketchbook.*] Here you see me *without* Lena. . . .

[*PAUL bursts out in exuberant laughter. MRS. KONIK has come in in the meantime from MRS. TRUELSEN's apartment with a bunch of flowers. Behind her peeps the widow TRUELSEN. Now the two of them likewise burst into laughter. MRS. TRUELSEN goes out.*]

PAUL. [*Runs over and embraces MRS. KONIK.*] I knew it all the time! Yet, I felt as if the world were coming to an end! For I had no longer anything to believe in!

MRS. KONIK. [*Pats his cheek.*] Yes, it was almost a shame to . . .

PAUL. . . . May I kiss her, Gerhard?

KONIK. No!

PAUL. [*Kissing MRS. KONIK.*] Thank you . . . [*MRS. KONIK crosses to her husband R. C.*] But tell me, dear friend, how *could* you draw that thing when she wasn't away from you?

KONIK. But she *was* away, the old hen!

MRS. KONIK. [*Laughing.*] You see, we wanted to try how it

would be to be parted, so one day I went over to Helsingborg with my sister. . . .

KONIK. And while I was eating my lunch I started drawing. . . .

MRS. KONIK. He was green that evening when I returned. . . .

And he gave me the devil! Paul, he has started a big picture.

PAUL. A "serious" one?

KONIK. Yes! And this time it is a painting, Paul! In colours, my boy. A big painting! Listen to this: In the center of the canvas stands a tremendous dish. . . . From everywhere people come hurrying, eyes like saucers and large spoons in their hands. . . . People of all classes and all kinds. . . . Noblemen, clergymen, shopkeepers, peasants and working-men. . . . They claw and tear at each other to get there first. Some are already sitting on the edge of the dish kicking with their legs and hitting about them with their spoons to keep the competitors away. . . . But they keep on coming. . . . A big, interminable mass of people reaching far out onto the horizon. . . . A whirl of spoons, arms and gaping mouths. . . . Some yelling, screaming and roaring. Others sneaking silently along, smooth and slippery, trying to wedge in where there is the least little opening. . . . Men, women, children; old men too. Young and old, the entire country! And on the dish is printed in large, beautiful and "serious" letters: For The Salvation of The Fatherland! For they all want to eat from the noblest motives— But above the porridge-dish and the mass of humanity, in a grandfather-chair on a little white cloud, and surrounded by angels, sits the good old, long-bearded God and He laughs so that He has to hold His stomach. . . . What do you think of it, Paul? It's good, eh? [*Crosses up and down.*] And I think I can paint it now since I came near succumbing to the temptation myself!

PAUL. [*With emotion.*] Gerhard, old boy, in the future you shall be my pillar of fire in the desert!

KONIK. Oh, I'm sure you can find your way all right. . . . By the way, how did you get along out at the "orphanage"?

PAUL. I got along splendidly out there!

KONIK. And do you think it has improved you!

PAUL. Oh, certainly!

MRS. KONIK. How did you sleep at night, Paul?

PAUL. Badly. . . . And just think of it, the jailer came to take my trousers away every night for fear I might run away.

KONIK. Seems to me one could run away better without them. . . .

MRS. KONIK. And how was the food?

PAUL. Splendid! I shall taste it till the day of my death!

KONIK. Tell me, Paul, didn't you sometimes "see" things, for instance when you thought of roast goose . . . or lamb in asparagus or the like?

PAUL. My dear fellow, I dreamt one evening in the dusk, that I was eating 12 crowns' worth of sirloin steak and that I drank 14 bottles of claret with it!

KONIK. [*With enthusiasm.*] Lena, we *must* break the law! Think of what drawings I could make then!—Didn't you dream about women too, Paul?

PAUL. [*Unconsciously catching hold of MRS. KONIK.*] Good Lord, don't let's talk about it . . . !

MRS. KONIK. [*Patting his hand.*] Poor fellow . . . !

MRS. TRUESEN. [*Comes in with some flowers. Reads the card attached to the flowers.*] Chief Clerk and Mrs. Thomas Hamann, Knight of Danebrog! [*Hands PAUL the flowers and curtsies.*] From his loving and bereaved relatives!

[*MRS. TRUESEN goes out smiling.*]

PAUL. Did you notice, Gerhard, that he *didn't* resign, our friend, the Chief Clerk? We know our "serious" people, you and I! The louder they cry their wares the less they have for sale! And do you know that he came to see me in prison? I enjoyed the meeting so, but perhaps I was a bit too hard on him. . . .

KONIK. You cannot be too hard on those renegades . . . ! He has been to see us too.

PAUL. To see you?

MRS. KONIK. [*Who is arranging the flowers.*] Yes. . . .

KONIK. [*From behind a chair.*] "Inasmuch as we lived in such an admirable state of wedlock, he thought he might count on our assistance towards a reconciliation between you and his hardboiled daughter." And then he said something about you

becoming editor of "The Conservative." He called it "that venerable trumpet." Ha, a newspaper of the stone-age! Fit for rulers of a thousand years ago!

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Easy now, easy. . . . And did he believe it?

KONIK. Of course he did!

PAUL. That's why he insists on having Esther and me spliced again; for then I should be a good catch.

KONIK. So it isn't true that you have accepted that editorial post?

PAUL. No truth in it at all. We poets don't do that sort of thing! We aren't serious enough for that!

MRS. KONIK. Your wife has become so chic and sweet, Paul Abel. . . . And so lively.

KONIK. Yes, we saw her jump over a policeman and three street cars to get to us. . . .

PAUL. I wouldn't take her back even if she jumped over a church spire! After this I'm going to live in celibacy—now that I have had some practice.

KONIK. You're right, you're right! Woman is the vermin of the world, crush her! [*Crosses to door R.*]

MRS. KONIK. I wonder, Gerhard darling, if I oughtn't to take another trip to Helsingborg?

KONIK. Don't you dare!

PAUL. All the same, it is a bit tiresome, this bachelor life, when one has become used to "orderly" conditions. I can tell you that, Mrs. Konik.

MRS. KONIK. Paul, you're longing for your wife!

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] I? I swear I am not!

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Comes in.*] Here's a telegram. . . . Answer prepaid.

[PAUL reads the telegram in silence and then hands it to KONIK.]

KONIK. [*Reading aloud.*] "Tomorrow position will be filled at meeting here at Rudersholm. Do you want it? Agnes Kluver." Is that the editorial post we talked about?

PAUL. Yes.

KONIK. And what are you going to reply?

PAUL. [*Smiling.*] And you ask that? [*Tears up the telegram rather theatrically.*]

MRS. TRUELSEN. Goodness, Mr. Abel, you tore up the reply-blank!

PAUL. There'll be no reply. . . . Tell the messenger that.

[MRS. TRUELSEN *goes out.*]

KONIK. [*With enthusiasm.*] You are truly a "man of principle," old chap!

MRS. KONIK. You certainly are! And what was the salary to have been?

PAUL. 5,000 crowns.

MRS. KONIK. [*Frightened.*] But then it is wrong of you. . . .

But . . . Why . . . Gerhard, did you hear it? 5,000 crowns?

KONIK. 5,000 crowns! I'm afraid I should surrender. . . .

Think of all the cigars you could buy with it!

PAUL. Excuse me, I had quite forgotten . . . ! [*Brings cigars and offers them.*]

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Comes in with a visiting card, laughing softly.*] Mr. Frederick Hamann enquires if Mr. Abel is receiving. . . .

PAUL. Freda. . . . Visiting card . . . ? "Mr. Abel receiving . . ."? Has she gone crazy? [*Goes quickly into the hall.*]

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Somewhat gratuitously.*] Mrs. Swanshield and myself are about the same age; we were confirmed together in '79. . . . [*Laughs contemptuously and goes out.* PAUL and FREDERICK *come in D. L. FREDERICK in brand-new clothes, high hat, gloves and cane with a silver knob. Formal and reserved.*]

PAUL. Well, you know everybody here, Freda. . . .

FREDERICK. [*Crosses To U. C.*] I have the honour. . . . [*To*

PAUL.] I desired to be one of the first to congratulate you on your return from your . . .

KONIK. Shall we say: "excursion"!

PAUL. Let's lay aside formalities, Freda! [*Smiling.*]

MRS. KONIK. Congratulations upon your engagement, Mr. Hamann.

KONIK. May it prove a blessing!

FREDERICK. Thanks. . . .

PAUL. [*Crosses up to him, shaking him.*] Are you chloroformed, Freda?

FREDERICK. [*Straightening his clothes.*] No . . . but I don't propose to allow myself to be influenced any longer by the frivolous minds of yourself and your friends!

KONIK. Hell is frozen.

FREDERICK. I have come more and more to believe that you had a bad influence on me, Paul, and, in fact, that you are the cause of my previous failure to get on!

PAUL. [*Not yet taking him seriously.*] Well . . . ?

FREDERICK. You coddled my weaknesses and flattered me by calling me "a fairy prince" instead of correcting me by serious talk. . . . But those times are over, thank Heaven, and I have come to my senses. [*Takes a pocketbook from his pocket.*] And may I now repay those little sums with which you have assisted me during that period. . . .

PAUL. You certainly may, and many thanks; I can use the money very nicely just now.

FREDERICK. Do you think it amounts to more than a hundred crowns?

PAUL. No, unfortunately. . . .

FREDERICK. Well, anyhow you can get the balance later if I owe you more. . . . [*Lays a banknote on the table.*] There you are.

PAUL. Tremendous thanks!

FREDERICK. My parents wish to be remembered.

PAUL. Thanks. . . . They sent me flowers too.

FREDERICK. My sister Esther too?

PAUL. No, not your "sister Esther" . . . at least, not yet.

FREDERICK. I am glad of that. . . . I now have a considerable influence over her— Marriage has ripened me into a man!

PAUL. What marriage, little Freda . . . ? Mine?

FREDERICK. No, mine.

PAUL. But you aren't married yet.

FREDERICK. Only a mere formality is lacking!—Life isn't all play, as you have gone about and taught, my dear Paul!

KONIK. I'll bet your life it isn't!

FREDERICK. But I have to withdraw; my wife and I are looking for an apartment. . . . She is waiting downstairs in the doorway. . . . She won't have anything to do with you and your friends. . . .

PAUL. By the way, Freda, your son-in-law the preacher sent his kind regards.

FREDERICK. Oh yes, he is the spiritual guide where . . . where you come from.

PAUL. Yes, very much so!

FREDERICK. Good-bye. . . . [*Bows all around.*]

PAUL. [*Bows.*] Good-bye, dear Freda. . . . [*Bursts out laughing.*] Upon my soul, you did that splendidly!

KONIK. Marvellously! Just as well as I did a while ago!

MRS. KONIK. Yes, it certainly was amusing, Mr. Hamann. . . . You're quite an actor!

PAUL. Tremendous!

FREDERICK. Dear Paul, I can see that you *will* not understand that deep down in my mind I am serious, and that this seriousness has now come to the surface! Let me, therefore, explain my present standpoint. According to the best of your ability you have always been good and kind to me, and for that I have been grateful to you. But—excuse my speaking plainly—your character lacks depth!

PAUL. Good-bye, Freda, good-bye . . . ! My regards to your wife!

KONIK. Well, I'll be damned!

PAUL. [*Earnestly.*] Twice two are five!

MRS. KONIK. [*Compassionately.*] Aren't you rather sorry about it, really, Paul . . . ? You used to be so fond of him.

PAUL. Oh, a little, perhaps. . . . And then again, no! You see, we have the laugh, Mrs. Konik. . . . The redeeming smile!

MRS. KONIK. But you can't smile at everything. . . .

PAUL and KONIK. [*At the same time.*] *Everything!*

MRS. KONIK. Now don't you think that it is slightly dangerous?

KONIK. Yes. . . . For the one we smile at!

MRS. KONIK. But, Paul, take that matter of the editorial post for instance; you *are* taking that seriously. . . .

PAUL. Yes, but I oughtn't to . . . !

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Coming in to lay the table.*] Beg your pardon, but wouldn't Mr. and Mrs. Konik like to lunch with Mr. Abel?

PAUL. Yes, do, please?

KONIK. [*Looking at his watch.*] Are you mad? We ought to have gone long ago. Come along, Lena!

KONIK. By the way, Paul, *I* have become a poet too!

PAUL. The deuce you have! We have enough of them.

KONIK. [*Pointing to his wife.*] It's to her! It's in verse! I made them the day she had run away from me.

MRS. KONIK. And it's lovely!

PAUL. Let's hear.

KONIK. [*With his arm around his wife.*]

You are so sweet of body
You are so sweet of soul
The Lord should have retained you
For Heaven is your goal.

As a little, dumpy angel
Like Rafael used to paint
No trouble would have pained you
In Heaven as a saint.

Instead a wife and mother you
Became, now was it wise?
But wherefore should *I* bother
You gave *me* paradise.

Crush *the* women!

PAUL. Splendid!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Very sweet!

[KONIK goes out with his wife, followed by PAUL. PAUL comes back.]

MRS. TRUELSEN. That's what I call a lovely couple, those two!
[*Setting the table.*]

PAUL. Lovely!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Always contented and happy with each other. . . .

PAUL. And in love!—God only knows how the devil they manage it, Mrs. Truelsen!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Yes, that's a puzzle to all of us!—*Are* you going away this afternoon, Mr. Abel?

PAUL. Of course, I am. I *must* get out and draw a breath of

fresh air! Just think of it, I haven't seen a green leaf for a whole month!

MRS. TRUELSEN. No, dear me, I suppose you haven't, poor fellow. . . . Tell me, how were things out there in the black hole. . . . [*Hall-bell rings.*] The bell's ringing; I suppose it's some more flowers. [*Goes out—comes in again—says rather stiffly.*] A woman!

PAUL. [*Interested.*] Ah, a woman . . . ! Do you know her?

MRS. TRUELSEN. No.

PAUL. What does she look like?

MRS. TRUELSEN. It's one of those with hair. . . . Shall I tell her you aren't at home?

PAUL. Oh no, what's the matter with you? One can't do that. . . .

[*The hall-door opens and ESTHER comes in.*]

[*ESTHER with a bunch of roses. She is chic, and prettily dressed and her hair is curled and combed away from her forehead.*]

PAUL.⁵ [*Happily surprised. Bursts out.*] Esther . . . ! Excuse me, Mrs. Truelsen, but couldn't you . . . ?

MRS. TRUELSEN. Goodness, yes! [*Offended.*] I don't want to disturb you. [*Goes out.*]

PAUL. [*Steps forward.*] But, Esther, how splendid you are looking!

ESTHER. [*Handing him the flowers.*] I wanted to bring you these. . . .

PAUL. [*Taking them.*] What lovely roses . . . ! [*Lays them aside and seizes her hands.*] I hardly recognized you, you look beautiful.

ESTHER. Do you think so?

PAUL. Won't you sit down?

ESTHER. No, thanks. . . . I'm going away immediately.

PAUL. [*Circles about her.*] No, no! Sit down awhile. I want to have a good look at you. [*ESTHER sits down on the bed. More and more taken with her.*] How lovely you have become!

ESTHER. Have I? I hope you really aren't angry because I've come up here?

PAUL. Angry? Because suddenly a very lovely lady steps into my room looking quite changed! [*ESTHER smiles.*] And the

way you smile . . . ! May I sit beside you awhile . . . ?

[*Sits down.*] And what pretty little hands you have got!

ESTHER. [*Laughing.*] Why, I've always had them. . . .

PAUL. No, you haven't! And your hair is combed up!

ESTHER. You asked me to do that. . . . [PAUL *puts his arm around her.*]

[MRS. TRUELSEN *comes in with flowers.*]

PAUL. [*Gets up angrily.*] What are you running in and out for all the time, Mrs. Truelsen?

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Stiffly.*] Flowers from Mr. Hamann the School Principal. . . .

PAUL. I wish the devil would fly away with his vegetables!

[ESTHER *laughs aloud. Charmed.*] That's my wife, Mrs. Truelsen, sitting there laughing so beautifully!

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Somewhat mollified.*] So that is Mrs. . . . !

Oh, I see it now . . . ! Welcome! Mrs. Abel has got some new hair. . . . Nowadays all sorts of tricks are allowed.

PAUL. Well, you better go, Mrs. Truelsen. . . . We have some business to attend to.

MRS. TRUELSEN. But the lunch . . . ? Mr. Abel will have to lunch at once, for he is going away!

ESTHER. [*Uneasy.*] Are you going away, Paul?

PAUL. No, I'm not going to leave this spot . . . ! That's something Mrs. Truelsen has invented just to be interesting!

MRS. TRUELSEN. I?

PAUL. [*Leads her towards the door.*] Good-bye, Mrs. Truelsen. . . . [MRS. TRUELSEN *goes out angrily. ESTHER laughs.*]

Will the lady permit me to help her take off her coat?

ESTHER. Thanks. . . .

PAUL. [*Helping her. With ardour.*] Now tell me, little lady, why you came up here . . . ?

ESTHER [*Embracing him.*] Because I want you myself. . . .

Because I have come to love you so tremendously since we are no longer together. . . . Because I don't want anyone else to have you. . . . Frederick has told me that. . . .

PAUL That ass. . . ! It was he who dragged her. . . .

ESTHER. Do you remember that you used so often to reproach me with not being flesh and blood. . . . Now I *am* flesh and blood. . . . Let me stay with you!

PAUL. With the greatest pleasure . . . ! Even if we should have to separate again in a week!

ESTHER. No, no. . . . From now on we shall be really good and sweet to one another—for ever!

PAUL. [*Presses her close.*] Indeed we shall. . . . I wish evening would hurry up and come. . . .

ESTHER. [*Pushing him away shyly—smiling.*] You are wearing your patent leather shoes. . . .

PAUL. Yes. . . . And just see what they look like now . . . ! “We do not guarantee patent leather”—And the worst of it is that it will be a long time before I can afford a pair of new ones!

ESTHER. [*With a shade of her stiffness.*] Ye-es . . . ?

PAUL. Yes, remember my book got confiscated and a new book is a long way off.

ESTHER. But you don’t need to write books any more . . .

PAUL. [*Laughing.*] Are you going to take over the business?

ESTHER. Father said you were to become editor. . . .

PAUL. O-oh, well . . . yes!

ESTHER. [*Stiffly.*] Perhaps it isn’t true. . . . Perhaps you haven’t had any offer from Mrs. Kluver after all?

PAUL. Certainly I had . . . ! Why, a few moments ago I received a telegram telling me that I should have to decide to-day.

ESTHER. [*Intently.*] Well . . . ?

PAUL. I tore up the telegram and did not answer at all. . . . But if you want me to take the position then I’ll take it . . . Of course!

ESTHER. [*Joyfully.*] Really?

PAUL. Really! Twice two are five!

ESTHER. Paul. . . . I’m afraid you’re making fun of me. . . .

PAUL. Not at all, little Esther! I would become editor of the “Evangelical Messenger”! A fig for “convictions” and “stand-points” where it concerns the happiness of two people!

ESTHER. Yes, isn’t that so? How happy we shall be! But you mustn’t take this step for *my* sake, Paul, for I should reproach myself all my life if . . .

PAUL. No, little Esther, forgive me. . . . I do it first and fore-

most for the sake of the Fatherland, the younger generation and the new literature!

ESTHER. You are great, Paul Abel!

PAUL. Yes, Esther Hamann, "greatness" has always been the strongest trait in my character . . . ! Are you going to remain with me . . . at once . . . right now?

ESTHER. [*Shyly.*] Yes, now I am yours. . . . How can I be anything else . . . ? How I love you. I'll never leave you again.

PAUL. No . . . ! And when we celebrate our silver wedding no doubt I shall have acquired a wooden leg and then all the guests must cut their names in it in memory of the day!

ESTHER. Now I know you're making fun of me, Paul, but I don't care. . . . Oh, Paul, how good and faithful we are going to be to each other, now we have come together again?

PAUL. [*His arms are about her and they remain like that.*] We certainly shall, little Esther! What the hearts have joined together let no theories put asunder!

MRS. TRUELSEN. [*Comes in with a bunch of roses.*] With love from Miss Othella Lustig.

CURTAIN

NOTES ON $2 \times 2 = 5$

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

by Egon Brecher

The characters in this play may be considered as types, and may therefore be played as mild caricatures, emphasizing general rather than individualized traits. . . . Paul Abel is Wied himself. In the beginning he is a radical, restive under rules and regulations and not willing to make concession to conventionality; at the end he recedes from this position and gives up his radicalism for his wife's sake. The realization that life is stronger than his will involves deep tragedy for Paul Abel. In portraying this character, it should be brought out strongly that Abel does not give in lightly, and that the rest of his life will be overshadowed by his compromise. His sense of humour, however, is strong enough to camouflage the tragedy. He has and always will have "the redeeming smile" . . . Esther Abel, his wife, an exact antithesis, was brought up in a conventional atmosphere. In the end she apparently comes to make concessions to her husband but her small superficial nature remains as inflexible and uncompromising as ever. . . . Thomas Hamann is an opportunist. His outlook changes as readily as his political opinions. He and his wife serve to show the atmosphere in which Esther was raised. . . . Gerhard Konik is more fundamentally radical than Abel; therefore his downfall or rise is more extreme than Paul's. He, too, compromises—giving up all he stands for, accepting a position with a good salary so that his wife and children may have comfort. Though he accepts his lot with a sense of humour, he also accepts it with a sense of finality.

ACT I

1. It is brought out very clearly in the first scene that Esther abhors anything improper, and is shocked by the love affairs of her maid.
2. Though Mr. and Mrs. Konik are as unlike as Esther and Paul, their family life is happy because Mrs. Konik is willing to yield for the sake of her children and her own peace of mind. The scene up to the Koniks' entrance should be played by Esther with conventional propriety, by Paul with great charm and inoffensive humour.
3. Frederick, raised by a father without principles, has none himself; and is therefore very susceptible to all sorts of influences. At present he is under the influence of Paul. He is a weakling and creates the impression of a very feminine person without actually being so. This feminine quality should be brought out clearly in presenting the character, but it must not be overdone.
4. Mr. Hamann is self-righteous, and concerned with appearances. Though he is not sincere, for the moment he believes himself to be so, and this role should be played, therefore, with sincerity.
5. Mrs. Hamann is sensible, always trying to settle family differences.
6. All through this scene Paul's sense of humour enables him to bear good-naturedly the attacks of his opponents. Just for a moment he loses his temper when Mr. Hamann accuses him of not being able to see things from a serious point of view. The slap which he gives Frederick on the line "Frederick is simply the fairy prince in the Hamann family" is not meant for Frederick, but it gets out of Paul's system what he feels towards the entire family.
7. The last scene may be exaggerated. Mr. Hamann is on one side of the stage, Paul on the other. Esther crosses, throws her words in Paul's face very dramatically, "You will never see me again, never," turns and exits. Mr. Hamann repeats the action and after his line, "I shall take the liberty of sending my lawyer to you within a few days, Mr. Abel" (emphasis on the Mr.), follows Ester.

8. After Mrs. Hamann and the Principal leave, Esther and Mr. Hamann reappear, Esther dressed for the street and Hamann carrying a small suit-case. They cross the room and when they are in the doorway, Paul reads his curtain line "What the Gods have put asunder, let no man join together."

ACT 2

1. It is important to avoid vulgarity. Othella Lustig is a charming girl totally unaware that she is leading a "sinful life."
2. Mrs. Kluver, a lady of rank, should be played as such. At the same time she understands the situation and has a sense of humour.
3. The lawyer is a Jew,—and played with a slight "shyster" touch. His greeting to Miss Lustig indicates a possible intimate relationship. His entrance marks a climax of a rather hilarious scene. It is evident that he brings news of importance to Paul; therefore, though the lawyer's part is small, it is important that what he says and does be thoroughly understood by the audience. With his usual indifference, Paul refuses to be depressed and becomes even more hilarious. This scene should be played carefully or it may become vulgar.
4. For the final curtain, Frederick crosses the stage to the rhythm of the music, stops in the open doorway and says, "I love Wagner."

ACT 3

1. Paul is enjoying his short confinement as he would enjoy any new experience.
2. The Jailer may be regarded as a symbol of the poorer classes. He sees Paul's escapades with mingled admiration and dismay, and believes almost literally what Paul tells him. There is something wistful and pathetic about this old chap. Paul at times finds him entertaining, at other times a bore. The

Jailer treats Paul with great consideration, and accords him many special privileges.

3. The Prisoner, if played correctly, should furnish a great deal of amusement, especially in his scenes with the Jailer, whom he hates profoundly, but whom he must humour and obey.
4. Paul's attitude toward the Pastor is one of concealed contempt, indicated by his exaggerated politeness. The Pastor is unaware of Paul's sarcasm in the beginning; at the end of the scene he realizes the situation and flies into a rage.
5. Mr. Hamann, as his behavior must indicate, changes his attitude when the political situation changes. Paul pretends to be converted to Hamann's former conservatism and adopts in this scene not only Hamann's views but also his mannerisms.

ACT 4

1. Jorgensen should be played with the typical roughness, coupled with the naïveté, of the professional athlete.
2. As indicated in the second act, Othella is just as sincere in her affection for Paul as for Jorgensen. When Paul tells her to go she can only say "Yes" because her tears prevent her from saying more.
3. Frederick should attempt to appear the perfect gentleman, but as he is not one he exaggerates—though not sufficiently to become farcical.
4. Konik should read the first two lines of his poem in an exaggerated tone as though making love, and on the next two lines changing to a casual tone as though stating a fact. The same applies to the second verse. After the third verse he kisses Lena and makes a quick exit on the line "Crush the Women."
5. In this scene Esther is as lovely as a young bride, reminding Paul of the time he first wooed her. These recollections make him comply with Esther's demand, though he realizes he is betraying his ideals. There is only one line which indicates tragedy—"I do it first and foremost for the sake of the Fatherland, the younger generation and the new literature." This should be read with deep bitterness, almost with tears.

ANTON CHEKHOV

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Though Anton Chekhov's father started life as a serf (his family purchased its freedom in 1841) he was moderately successful in business—to the extent, at least, of providing his five sons and one daughter with comfortable surroundings and fair education. Anton was born in 1860, the third son, and his youth was spent in Taganrog, a town on the sea of Azov. To quote Constance Garnett, "He was a sturdy, lively boy, extremely intelligent and inexhaustible in jokes and enterprises of all kinds."

In 1879 he entered the University of Moscow to study medicine; and it was under the absolute necessity of earning money—his father's business having failed—that he wrote his first published story, *A Letter to a Learned Neighbor*. The following summer he spent with his brother in the Moscow province where Chekhov gained an insight into military society which he turned to account in *The Three Sisters*.

With the appreciation of Gregorovitch he began writing seriously and in the next few years produced several stories and two plays—*Ivanov* and *The Bear* later revised to *Uncle Vanya*. At this time he was also working on a novel, later destroyed, in which he wished to express "the most absolute freedom, freedom from force and fraud in whatever form the two latter may be expressed." Consumption, from which he ultimately died, was developing though he refused to be examined and properly cared for.

In 1890 his younger brother, who was studying law, sent his treatise on the management of prisons to Chekhov who became so interested he decided to visit the penal settlement of Sahalin, Siberia. Despite his condition—which strangely enough improved during the journey—he started in April and after

great hardship arrived there July 11th. The articles resulting from his observations while there did much to hasten penal reforms.

The Sea Gull was written in 1896, *The Three Sisters* in 1900. His physician, at this time, urged him to go to Switzerland for his health; and finally, with his wife Olga Knipper whom he had married in May, 1901, he left Russia. Chekhov lived three more years during which time he wrote and saw produced *The Cherry Orchard*. He died July 2, 1904.

Ibsen, whom Chekhov deeply admired, was a social reformer more in his writing than in his life; Chekhov's writing is curiously free from the reformer's taint, yet a good portion of his life's energy was directed towards the amelioration of those less fortunate. His life and art, both marked by the same qualities, kept each to its distinct province.

THE THREE SISTERS

by Anton Chekhov

Translated by Constance Garnett

THE THREE SISTERS

OLGA	<i>Mary Ward</i>
IRINA	<i>Josephine Hutchinson</i>
MASHA	<i>Eva Le Gallienne</i>
IVAN ROMANITCH TCHEBUTYKIN (Army Doctor)	<i>Sayre Crawley</i>
BARON NIKOLAY LVOVITCH TUSENBACH (Lieutenant)	<i>Harold Moulton</i>
VASSILY VASSILYEVITCH SOLYONY (Cap- tain)	<i>Robert F. Ross</i>
ANFISA (The Nurse, an old woman of eighty)	<i>Leona Roberts</i>
FERAPONT (An old Porter from the Ru- ral Board)	<i>J. Edward Bromberg</i>
ORDERLY	<i>Walter Tupper Jones</i>
LT. COL. ALEXANDER IGNATYEVITCH VERSHININ (Battery Commander)	<i>Egon Brecher</i>
ANDREY SERGEYEVITCH PROZOROV	<i>Donald Cameron</i>
FYODOR ILLYITCH KULIGIN (A High School Teacher, husband of Masha)	<i>Paul Leyssac</i>
NATALYA IVANOVNA (Andrey's fiancée, afterwards his wife)	<i>Beatrice De Neergaard</i>
ALEXEY PETROVITCH FEDOTIK (Second Lieutenant)	<i>John Eldredge</i>
VLADIMIR KARLOVITCH RODDEY (Second Lieutenant)	<i>Walter Beck</i>
MAID	<i>Margaret Love</i>
TWO MUSICIANS	<i>Ruth Wilton and Landon Herrick</i>



Photo by White Studio

Scene from Act IV, Three Sisters

ACT ONE

[*In the house of the Prozorovs. A drawing-room with columns beyond which a large room is visible. Midday; it is bright and sunny. The table in the further room is being laid for lunch.*

OLGA, in the dark blue uniform of a high-school teacher, is correcting exercise books, at times standing still and then walking up and down; MASHA, in a black dress, is reading a book; IRINA, in a white dress, is standing plunged in thought.]

OLGA.¹ [*In broken-up, jerky speech*] Father died just a year ago, on this very day—the fifth of May, your name-day, Irina. It was very cold, it was snowing. I felt as though I should not live through it; you lay fainting as though you were dead. But now a year has passed and we can think of it calmly; you are already in a white dress, your face is radiant. [*The clock strikes twelve*] The clock was striking then too. [*A pause*] I remember the band playing and the firing at the cemetery as they carried the coffin. Though he was a General in command of a brigade, yet there weren't many people there. It was raining, though. Heavy rain and snow.

IRINA. Why recall it!

[BARON TUSENBACH, TCHEBUTYKIN and SOLYONY appear near the table in the dining-room, beyond the columns.]

OLGA. It is warm today, we can have the windows open, but the birches are not in leaf yet. [*Looks at window.*] Father was given his brigade and came here with us from Moscow eleven years ago and I remember distinctly that in Moscow at this time, at the beginning of May, everything was already in flower; it was warm, and everything was bathed in sunshine. It's eleven years ago, and yet I remember it all as though we had left it yesterday. Oh, dear! [*Comes to top of table with exercise books,*¹ *stands over table.*] I woke up this

morning, I saw a blaze of sunshine. I saw the spring, and joy stirred in my heart. I had a passionate longing to be back at home again!

TCHEBUTYKIN. The devil it is!

TUSENBACH. Of course, it's nonsense.

[MASHA,² brooding over a book, softly whistles a song.]

OLGA. [*Crosses to piano.*] Don't whistle, Masha. How can you!

[*A pause.*] Being all day in school and then at my lessons till the evening gives me a perpetual headache and thoughts as gloomy as though I were old. And really these four years that I have been at the high-school I have felt my strength and my youth oozing away from me every day. And only one yearning grows stronger and stronger. . . .

IRINA.³ To go back to Moscow. To sell the house, to make an end of everything here, and off to Moscow. . . .

OLGA. Yes! To Moscow, and quickly.

[TCHEBUTYKIN and TUSENBACH laugh.]

IRINA. Andrey will probably be a professor, he will not live here anyhow. The only difficulty is poor Masha.

OLGA. Masha will come and spend the whole summer in Moscow every year.

[MASHA softly whistles a tune.]

IRINA. Please God it will all be managed. [*To piano. Looking out of window.*] How fine it is today; I don't know why I feel so lighthearted! I remembered this morning that it was my name-day and at once I felt joyful and thought of my childhood when mother was living. And I was thrilled by such wonderful thoughts [*Back to window.*] such thoughts!

OLGA.⁴ You are radiant today and looking lovelier than usual. And Masha is lovely too. Andrey would be nice-looking, but he has grown too fat and that does not suit him. And I have grown older and ever so much thinner. I suppose it's because I get so cross with the girls at school. Today now I am free, I am at home, and my head doesn't ache, and I feel younger than yesterday. I am only twenty-eight. . . . [*Takes books to table, sits L. of it.*] It's all quite right, it's all from God, but it seems to me that if I were married and sitting at home all day, it would be better. [*A pause.*] I should be fond of my husband.

[SOLYONY and TCHEBUTYKIN are sitting in dining-room.]

TUSENBACH. [To SOLYONY.] You talk such nonsense, I am tired of listening to you. [Coming into the drawing-room.]

I forgot to tell you, you will receive a visit today from Ver-shinin, the new commander of our battery. [Sits down to the piano.]

OLGA. Well, I shall be delighted.

IRINA. Is he old?

TUSENBACH. No, nothing to speak of. Forty or forty-five at the most. He seems to be a nice fellow. He is not stupid, that's certain. Only he talks a lot.

IRINA. Is he interesting?

TUSENBACH. Yes, he is all right. [Plays piano.] Only he has a wife, a mother-in-law and two little girls. And it's his second wife too. He is paying calls and telling everyone that he has a wife and two little girls. He'll tell you so too. [Stops playing.] His wife seems a bit crazy, with her hair in a long plait, always talks in a high-flown style, makes philosophical reflections and frequently attempts to commit suicide, evidently to annoy her husband. I should have left a woman like that years ago, but he puts up with her and merely complains. [Baron plays again.]

SOLYONY.⁵ [Crosses to R. C. Coming into the drawing-room with TCHEBUTYKIN.] With one hand I can only lift up half a hundredweight, but with both hands I can lift up a hundredweight and a half or even a hundredweight and three-quarters. [Above table.] From that I conclude that two men are not only twice but three times as strong as one man, or even more. . . . [Crosses to piano.]

TCHEBUTYKIN.⁶ [Reading the newspaper as he comes in, stands above table.] For hair falling out . . . two ounces of naphthaline in half a bottle of spirit . . . to be dissolved and used daily. . . . [Puts it down in his notebook.] Let's make a note of it. [IRINA crosses to table.] No, I don't want it. . . . [Scratches it out.] It doesn't matter.

IRINA. Ivan Romanitch, dear Ivan Romanitch!

TCHEBUTYKIN. What is it, my child, my joy?

IRINA. Tell me, why is it I am so happy today? As though I

were sailing under the wide blue sky and great white birds wheeling overhead. Why is it? Why?

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Kissing both her hands, tenderly.*] My white bird. . . .

IRINA. When I woke up this morning, got up and washed, it suddenly seemed to me as though everything in the world was clear to me and that I knew how one ought to live. Dear Ivan Romanitch, I know all about it. A man ought to work, to toil by the sweat of his brow, whoever he may be, and all the purpose and meaning of his life, his happiness, his ecstasies lie in that alone. How delightful to be a workman who gets up before dawn and breaks stones on the road, or a shepherd, or a schoolmaster teaching children, or an engine-driver. . . . Oh, dear! it would be better to be an ox, better to be a humble horse and work, than human being. A young woman who wakes at twelve o'clock, then has coffee in bed, then spends two hours dressing. . . . Oh, how awful that is! Just as one has a craving for water in hot weather I have a craving for work. And if I don't get up early and work, give me up as a friend, Ivan Romanitch.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Tenderly.*] I'll give you up, I'll give you up. . . .

OLGA. Father trained us to *get up* at seven o'clock. Now Irina *wakes* at seven and lies in bed at least till nine thinking. And she looks so serious! [*Laughs.*]

IRINA. You are used to thinking of me as a child and are surprised when I look serious. I am twenty!

[SOLYONY *eats candies.*]

TUSENBACH. The yearning for work, oh, how well I understand it! I have never worked in my life. I was born in cold, idle Petersburg, in a family that had known nothing of work or cares of any kind. I remember, when I came home from the school of cadets, a footman used to pull off my boots. I used to be troublesome. [*Top of table; sits.*] But my mother looked at me with reverential awe, and was surprised when other people did not do the same. I was guarded from work. But I doubt if they have succeeded in guarding me completely, I doubt it! The time is at hand, an avalanche is moving down upon us, a mighty clearing storm which is coming, is already

near and will soon blow the laziness, the indifference, the distaste for work, the rotten *boredom* out of our society. I shall work, and in another twenty-five or thirty years everyone will have to work. Everyone!

TCHEBUTYKIN. I am not going to work.

TUSENBACH. [*Crosses to piano; top.*] You don't count.

SOLYONY. In another twenty-five years you won't be here, thank God. You will kick the bucket, in two or three years, or I shall lose my temper and put a bullet through your head, my darling. [*Pulls a scent-bottle out of his pocket and sprinkles his chest and hands.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Laughs.*] And I really have never done anything at all. I haven't done a stroke of work since I left the university, I have never read a book, I read nothing but newspapers. . . . [*Takes another newspaper out of his pocket.*] Here . . . I know, for instance, from the newspapers that there was such a person as Dobrolyubox, but what he wrote. . . . Goodness only knows. I haven't the least idea. [*A knock is heard on the floor from the storey below.*] There . . . they are calling me downstairs, someone has come for me. Wait a minute. . . . I'll be back directly. [*Goes out hurriedly, combing his beard.*]

IRINA. He's got something up his sleeve.

TUSENBACH. Yes, he went out with a solemn face, evidently he is just going to bring you a present.

IRINA. What a nuisance!

OLGA. Yes, it's awful. He is always doing something silly.

MASHA.⁷ By the sea-strand an oak-tree green . . . upon that oak a chain of gold . . . upon that oak a chain of gold. [*Gets up humming softly.*]

OLGA. You are not very cheerful today, Masha. [*MASHA, humming, puts on her hat.*] Where are you going?

MASHA. [*Crosses up.*] Home.

IRINA. How queer! . . .

TUSENBACH. To go away from a name-day party!

MASHA. Never mind. . . . I'll come in the evening. Good-bye, my darling . . . [*Kisses IRINA.*] Once again I wish you, be well and happy. In old days, [*Above table.*] when father was alive, we always had thirty or forty officers here on name-

days; it was noisy, but today there is only a man and a half, and it is as still as the [*Crosses to steps and back again.*] desert. . . . I'll go. . . . I am in the blues today, [*IRINA on sofa.*] I am feeling glum, so don't you mind what I say. [*Laughing through her tears.*] We'll talk some other time, and so for now good-bye, darling, [*Crosses to IRINA and then back of sofa.*] I am going. . . .

IRINA. [*Discontentedly.*] Oh, how tiresome you are. . . .

OLGA. [*With tears.*] I understand you, Masha. [*MASHA crosses to OLGA; kisses her.*]

SOLYONY. If a man philosophizes, there will be philosophy or sophistry, anyway, but if a woman philosophizes, or two do it, then you may just snap your fingers!

MASHA. [*To above table.*] What do you mean to say by that, you terrible person?

SOLYONY. Nothing. He had not time to say "alack," before the bear was on his back.

[*A pause.*]

MASHA. [*To OLGA, angrily up to steps.*] Don't blubber!

[*Enter ANFISA and FERAPONT carrying a cake.*]

ANFISA. [*Crosses back above sofa.*] This way, my good man. Come in, your boots are clean. [*To IRINA.*] From the Rural Board, from Mihail Ivanitch Protopopov. . . . A cake.

IRINA. Thanks. Thank him. [*Takes the cake—a large one, on a platter covered with a linen cloth.*]

FERAPONT. Ha?

IRINA. [*More loudly.*] Thank him from me!

OLGA. Nurse dear, give him some pie. Ferapont, go along, they will give you some pie.

FERAPONT. Eh?

ANFISA. Come along, Ferapont Spiridonitch, my good soul, come along. . . . [*R. end of dining-room FERAPONT puts cake on dining-table.*] [*Goes out with FERAPONT.*]

MASHA. [*Above table.*] I don't like that Protopopov, that Mihail Potapitch or Ivanitch. He ought not to be invited.

IRINA. I did not invite him.

MASHA. That's a good thing.

[*Enter TCHEBUTYKIN, followed by an ORDERLY with a silver*

samovar; a hum of surprise and displeasure—both up L. C.]

OLGA. [*Putting her hands over her face.*] A samovar! How awful! [*Goes out to the table in the dining-room.*]

IRINA. My dear Ivan Romanitch, what are you thinking about!

TUSENBACH [*Laughs, sits L. of piano.*] I warned you!

MASHA. Ivan Romanitch, you really have no conscience!

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Above table, ORDERLY above sofa, MASHA at piano.*] My dear girls, my darlings, you are all that I have, you are the most precious treasures I have on earth. I shall soon be sixty, I am an old man, alone in the world, a useless old man. . . . There is nothing good in me, except my love for you, and if it were not for you, I should have been dead long ago. . . . [*To IRINA.*] My dear, my little girl, I've known you from a baby . . . I've carried you in my arms. . . . I loved your dear mother. . . .

IRINA. But why such expensive presents?

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Angry and tearful.*] Expensive presents. . . . Get along with you! [*To the ORDERLY.*] Take the samovar in there. . . . [*Mimicking.*] Expensive presents. . . . [*The ORDERLY carries the samovar into the dining-room.*]

[*TUSENBACH and SOLYONY rise.*]

ANFISA. [*Crossing the room.*] My dears, a Colonel [*Crosses to right of dining-room.*] is here, a stranger. . . . He has taken off his greatcoat, children, he is coming in here. Irinushka, you must be nice and polite, dear. . . . [*As she goes out.*] And it's time for lunch already . . . mercy on us. . . .

TUSENBACH. Vershinin, I suppose. [*Enter VERSHININ.*] Colonel Vershinin.

[*MASHA crosses L. C. above sofa.*]

VERSHININ.⁸ [*To MASHA and IRINA.*] I have the honour to introduce myself, my name is Vershinin. I am very, very glad to be in your house at last. How you have grown up!

IRINA. Please sit down. We are delighted to see you.

VERSHININ. [*With animation.*] How glad I am, how glad I am! [*Above table. Sits head of table.*] But there are three of you sisters. I remember—three little girls. I don't remember your faces, but that your father, Colonel Prozorov, had three little girls I remember perfectly, and saw them with my own eyes. How times passes! Hey-ho, how it passes!

TUSENBACH. Alexander Ignatyevitch has come from Moscow.

IRINA. [*Real excitement and emotion.*] From Moscow? You have come from Moscow?

VERSHININ. Yes. Your father was in command of a battery there, and I was an officer in the same brigade. [*To MASHA.*] Your face, now, I seem to remember.

MASHA. I don't remember you.

IRINA. [*Crosses to bottom of steps.*] Olga! Olga! [*Calls into the dining-room.*] Olga, come! [*OLGA comes out of the dining-room into the drawing-room.*] Colonel Vershinin is from Moscow, it appears.

VERSHININ. So you are Olga Sergeyevna, the eldest. . . . [*Kisses OLGA's hands.*] And you are Marya. . . . And you are Irina, the youngest. . . .

OLGA. You come from Moscow?

VERSHININ. Yes. I studied in Moscow. I began my service there, I served there for years, and at last I have been given a battery here—I have come here as you see. I don't remember you exactly, I only remember you were three sisters. I remember your father. If I shut my eyes, I can see him as though he were living. I used to visit you in Moscow. . . .

OLGA. [*By MASHA.*] I thought I remembered everyone, and now all at once . . .

VERSHININ. My name is Alexander Ignatyevitch.

IRINA. Alexander Ignatyevitch, you have come from Moscow. . . . What a surprise!

OLGA. We are going to move there, you know.

IRINA. We are hoping to be there by the autumn. It's our native town, we were born there. . . . In Old Basmanny Street. . . . [*Both laugh with delight.*]

[TUSENBACH *sits on chair by piano.*]

MASHA. To see someone from our own town unexpectedly! [*Eagerly.*] Now I remember! Do you remember, Olga, they used to talk of the "love-sick major"? You were a lieutenant at that time and were in love, and for some reason everyone called you "major" to tease you. . . .

VERSHININ [*Laughs.*] Yes, yes. . . . The love-sick major, that was it.

MASHA. You only had a moustache then. . . . Oh, how much older you look! [*Through tears.*] How much older! [*Rises, crosses R. to window.*]

VERSHININ. Yes, when I was called the love-sick major I was young, I was in love. Now it's very different.

OLGA. But you haven't a single grey hair. You have grown older but you are not old.

VERSHININ. I am in my forty-third year, though. Is it long since you left Moscow?

IRINA. Eleven years. But why are you crying, Masha, you queer girl? . . .

MASHA. [*Crosses C.*] I am all right. And in which street did you live? [*Through her tears.*]

VERSHININ. In Old Basmanny.

OLGA. And that's where we lived too. . . .

VERSHININ. At one time I lived in Nyemetsky Street. [*Crosses to sofa, sits by IRINA.*] I used to go from there to the Red Barracks. There is a gloomy-looking bridge on the way, where the water makes a noise. It makes a lonely man feel melancholy. [*A pause.*] And here what a broad, splendid river! A marvellous river!

OLGA. [*Sits right of table.*] Yes, but it is cold. It's cold here and there are gnats. . . .

VERSHININ. [*TUSENBACH at piano.*] How can you! You've such a splendid healthy Russian climate here. Forest, river . . . and birches here too. Charming, modest birches, I love them better than any other trees. It's nice to live here. The only strange thing is that the railway station is fifteen miles away. . . . And no one knows why it is so.

[*Conversation here should be uneven, spasmodic as conversation is. Awkward at times—nothing even or polished.*]

SOLYONY. I know why it is. [*They all look at him.*] Because if the station had been near it would not have been so far, and if it is far, it's because it is not near.

[*An awkward silence.*]

TUSENBACH. He is fond of his joke, Vassily Vassilyevitch.

OLGA. Now I recall you, too. I remember.

[*SOLYONY is in chair Right.*]

VERSHININ. I knew your mother.

TCHEBUTYKIN. She was a fine woman, the kingdom of heaven be hers.

IRINA. Mother is buried in Moscow.

OLGA. In the Novo-Dyevitchy. . . .

MASHA. Would you believe it, I am already beginning to forget her face. So people will not remember us either . . . they will forget us.

VERSHININ. Yes. They will forget us. There is no help for it, such is our fate. What seems to us serious, significant, very important, will one day be forgotten or will seem unimportant. [*A pause.*] And it's curious that we can't possibly tell what exactly will be considered great and important, and what will seem paltry and ridiculous. Did not the discoveries of Columbus or Copernicus, let us say, seem useless and ridiculous at first, while the nonsensical writings of some wiseacre seemed true? And it may be that our present life, which we accept so readily, will in time seem queer, uncomfortable, not sensible, not clean enough, perhaps even sinful. . . .

TUSENBACH. Who knows? Perhaps our age will be called a great one and remembered with respect. Now we have no torture-chamber, no executioners, no invasions, but at the same time how much unhappiness there is. [*Crosses Left Center.*]

SOLYONY. [*In a high-pitched voice.*] Chook, chook, chook. . . .

It's bread and meat to the baron to talk about ideas. [*Ad lib.*]

TUSENBACH. Vassily Vassilyevitch, I ask you to let me alone. . . . [*Moves to another seat.*] It gets boring, at last. . . .

[*Crosses to table by VERSHININ.*]

SOLYONY. [*In a high-pitched voice.*] Chook, chook, chook. . . . [*Ad lib.*]

TUSENBACH. [*To VERSHININ.*] The unhappiness which one observes now—there is so much of it—does indicate, however, that society has reached a certain moral level. . . .

VERSHININ. Yes, yes, of course.

TCHEBUTYKIN. You said just now, Baron, that our age will be called great; but people are small all the same. . . . [*Gets up.*] Look how small I am.

BARON. Well?

[*A violin is played behind the scenes.*]

[TUSENBACH *crosses to piano, sits chair.*]

MASHA. That's Andrey playing, our brother.

IRINA. He is the learned one of the family. We expect him to become a professor. Father was a military man, but his son has gone in for a learned career.

MASHA. It was father's wish.

OLGA. We have been teasing him today. We think he is a little in love.

IRINA. With a young lady living near here. She will come in today most likely.

MASHA. Oh, how she dresses! It's not that her clothes are merely ugly or out of fashion, they are simply pitiful. A queer gaudy yellowish skirt with some sort of vulgar fringe and a red blouse. And her cheeks scrubbed till they shine! Andrey is not in love with her—I won't admit that, he has some taste anyway—it's simply for fun, he is teasing us, playing the fool. I heard yesterday that she is going to be married to Protopopov, the chairman of our Rural Board. And a very good thing too. . . . [*At the side door.*] Andrey, come here, for a minute!

[*Enter ANDREY up L. C.*]

OLGA. This is my brother, Andrey Sergeyeitch.

VERSHININ. My name is Vershinin.

ANDREY. And mine is Prozorov. [*Crosses to VERSHININ who has risen. Mops his perspiring face.*] You are our new battery commander?

OLGA. Only fancy, Alexander Ignatyevitch comes from Moscow.

ANDREY. Really? Well, then, I congratulate you. [*Shakes hands.*] My sisters will let you have no peace.

VERSHININ. I have had time to bore your sisters already.

IRINA. [*Rises, crosses to table.*] See what a pretty picture-frame Andrey has given me today! [*Shows the frame.*] He made it himself.

VERSHININ. [*Looking at the frame and not knowing what to say.*] Yes . . . it is a thing. . . .

IRINA. And that frame above the piano, he made that too!

[ANDREY *waves his hand in despair and moves away.* VER-

SHININ *crosses to piano*. MASHA *runs to ANDREY to prevent him leaving room.*]

OLGA. He is learned, and he plays the violin, and he makes all sorts of things with the fretsaw. In fact he is good all round.

Andrey, don't go! That's a way he has—he always tries to make off! Come here!

[MASHA and IRINA *take him by the arms, and, laughing, lead him back.*]

MASHA. Come, come!

ANDREY. Leave me alone, please!

MASHA. How absurd he is! Alexander Ignatyevitch used to be called the love-sick major at one time, and he was not a bit offended.

VERSHININ. Not in the least!

MASHA. And I should like to call you the love-sick violinist!

IRINA. Or the love-sick professor!

OLGA.⁹ He is in love! Andryusha is in love! [*Ring around ANDREY.*]

IRINA. [*Clasps her hands.*] Bravo, Bravo! Encore! Andryusha is in love!

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Comes up behind ANDREY and puts both arms round his waist.*] Nature our hearts for love created! [*Laughs, then sits down and reads the newspaper which he takes out of his pocket.*]

[MASHA *sits side of table*. IRINA *on sofa*. OLGA *right center*. VERSHININ *leans on piano*. TUSENBACH *sits piano*. SOLYONY *sits down right*. TCHEBUTYKIN *back in chair.*]

ANDREY. [*Up C.*] Come, that's enough, that's enough . . . [*Mops his face.*] I haven't slept all night and this morning I don't feel quite myself, as they say. I read till four o'clock and then went to bed, but it was no use. I thought of one thing and another, and then it gets light so early; the sun simply pours into my bedroom. I want while I am here during the summer to translate a book from the English.

VERSHININ. You read English then?

ANDREY. [*Up C.*] Yes. Our father, the kingdom of heaven be his [*Crosses himself.*] oppressed us with education. It's absurd and silly, but it must be confessed I began to get fatter after his death, and I have grown too fat in one year, as

though a weight had been taken off my body. Thanks to our father we all know English, French and German, and Irina knows Italian too. But what it cost us!

MASHA. In this town to know three languages is an unnecessary luxury! Not even a luxury, but an unnecessary encumbrance, like a sixth finger. We know a great deal that is unnecessary.

VERSHININ.¹⁰ [*Crosses above table during speech.*] What next! [*Laughs.*] You know a great deal that is unnecessary! I don't think there can be a town so dull and dismal that intelligent and educated people are unnecessary in it. Let us suppose that of the hundred thousand people living in this town, which is, of course, uncultured and behind the times, there are only three of your sort. It goes without saying that you cannot conquer the mass of darkness round you; little by little, as you go on living, you will be lost in the crowd. You will have to give in to it. Life will get the better of you, but still you will not disappear without a trace. After you there may appear perhaps six like you, then twelve and so on until such as you form a majority. In two or three hundred years life on earth will be unimaginably beautiful, marvellous. Man needs such a life and, though he hasn't it yet, he must have a presentiment of it, expect it, dream of it, prepare for it; for that he must see and know more than his father and grandfather. [*Laughs.*] And you complain of knowing a great deal that's unnecessary.

MASHA. [*Takes off her hat.*] I'll stay to lunch.

[*OLGA crosses to window.*]

IRINA. [*With a sigh.*] All that really ought to be written down. . . .

[*ANDREY slips away unobserved.*]

TUSENBACH. You say that after many years life on earth will be beautiful and marvellous. That's true. But in order to have any share, however far off, in it now one must be preparing for it, one must be working. . . .

VERSHININ. [*Gets up.*] Yes. What a lot of flowers you have! [*Crosses to right of table. Looking round.*] And delightful rooms. I envy you! I've been knocking about all my life from one wretched lodging to another. [*Crosses above table.*] Always with two chairs and a sofa and stoves which smoke.

What I have been lacking all my life is just such flowers. . . . [*Rubs his hands.*] But there, it's no use thinking about it!

TUSENBACH. Yes, we must work. I'll be bound you think the German is getting sentimental. But on my honour I am Russian and I can't even speak German. My father belonged to the Orthodox Church . . . [*A pause.*]

VERSHININ. [*Walks about the stage. He doesn't listen to TUSENBACH. He speaks on as though he had not been interrupted. Walks all over stage.*] I often think, what if one were to begin life over again, knowing what one is about! If one life, which has been already lived, were only a rough sketch so to say, and the second were the fair copy! Then, I fancy, every one of us would try before everything not to repeat himself, anyway he would create a different setting for his life; would have a house like this with plenty of light and masses of flowers. [*Above table.*] . . . I have a wife and two little girls, my wife is in delicate health and so on and so on, but if I were to begin life over again I would not marry. . . . No, no!

[*Enter KULIGIN in the uniform of a school-master.*]

KULIGIN.¹¹ [*Goes up to IRINA R. of sofa.*] Dear sister, allow me to congratulate you on your name-day with all my heart and to wish you good health and everything else that one can desire for a girl of your age. And to offer you as a gift this little book. [*Gives her a book.*] The history of our high-school for fifty years, written by myself. An insignificant little book, written because I had nothing better to do, but still you can read it. [*OLGA is by TUSENBACH.*] Good morning, friends. [*To VERSHININ.*] My name is Kuligin, teacher in the high-school here.

VERSHININ. Vershinin.

KULIGIN. [*To IRINA.*] In that book you will find a list of all who have finished their studies in our high-school during the last fifty years. *Feci quod potui, faciant meliora potentes.* [*Kisses MASHA.*]

IRINA. Why, but you gave a copy of this book at Easter.

KULIGIN. [*Laughs.*] Impossible! If that's so, give it me back, or better still, give it to the Colonel. Please accept it, Colonel.

Some day when you are bored you can read it. [IRINA rises, gives book to VERSHININ and returns to sofa.]

VERSHININ. Thank you. [*Is about to take leave.*] I am extremely glad to have made your acquaintance. . . .

OLGA. [*Crosses a step R.*] You are going? No, no!

IRINA. [*Rises—SOLYONY rises.*] You must stay to lunch with us. Please do.

OLGA. Pray do!

VERSHININ. [*Bozes.*] I believe I have chanced on a name-day.

Forgive me, I did not know and have not congratulated you . . . [*Walks away with OLGA into the dining-room.*]

[MASHA crosses R. of table. IRINA crosses to window.]

KULIGIN. [*Walks about. SOLYONY to R. TUSENBACH in chair by piano.*] Today, gentlemen, is Sunday, a day of rest. Let us all rest and enjoy ourselves each in accordance with our age and our position. The carpets should be taken up for the summer and put away till the winter. . . . Persian powder or naphthaline. . . . The Romans were healthy because they knew how to work and they knew how to rest, they had *mens sana in corpore sano*. Their life was moulded into a certain framework. Our headmaster says that the most important thing in every life is its framework. What loses its framework comes to an end—and it's the same in our everyday life. [*Puts his arm round MASHA'S waist, laughing.*] Masha loves me. My wife loves me. [MASHA crosses to sofa, sits. Crosses to window and back again.] And the window curtains, too, ought to be put away together with the carpets. . . . Today I feel cheerful and in the best of spirits. Masha, at four o'clock this afternoon we have to be at the headmaster's. An excursion has been arranged for the teachers and their families.

MASHA. I am not going.

KULIGIN. [*Crosses to MASHA. Grieved.*] Dear Masha, why not?

MASHA. [KULIGIN puts hands on her shoulder.] We'll talk about it afterwards . . . Very well, I will go, only let me alone, please . . . [*Walks away angrily. Crosses to piano above table.*]

KULIGIN. [*Following MASHA.*] And then we shall spend the evening at the headmaster's. In spite of the delicate state of his health, that man tries before all things to be sociable. He

is an excellent, noble personality. A splendid man. Yesterday, after the meeting, he said to me, "I am tired, Fyodor Ilyitch, I am tired." [*Looks at the clock, then at his watch.*] Your clock is seven minutes fast. [*Calling to OLGA.*] "Yes," he said, "I am tired."

[*Sounds of a violin behind the scenes.*]

OLGA. [*In dining-room with VERSHININ.*] Come to lunch, please. There's a pie!

KULIGIN. [*Up to OLGA.*] Ah, Olga, my dear Olga! Yesterday I was working from early morning till eleven o'clock at night and was tired out, and today I feel happy. [*IRINA crosses to TCHEBUTYKIN and wakes him up. Goes up to the table in the dining-room.*] My dear. . . .

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Puts the newspaper in his pocket and combs his beard.*] Pie? Splendid!

MASHA. [*To TCHEBUTYKIN, sternly.*] Only mind you don't drink today! Do you hear? It's bad for you to drink.

[*IRINA sits sofa above table.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. Oh, come, that's a thing of the past. It's two years since I got drunk. [*Impatiently.*] But there, my good girl, what does it matter!

MASHA.¹² [*Crosses to table.*] Anyway, don't you dare to drink. Don't dare. [*Angrily, but so as not to be heard by her husband.*] Again, damnation take it, I am to be bored a whole evening at the headmaster's!

TUSENBACH. I wouldn't go if I were you. . . . It's very simple.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Don't go, my love.

MASHA. Oh, yes, don't go! . . . It's a damnable life, insufferable . . . [*Goes to the dining-room.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Following her.*] Come, come. . . .

SOLYONY. [*Going to the dining-room.*] Chook, chook, chook. . . .

TUSENBACH. Enough, Vassily Vassilyevitch! Leave off!

SOLYONY. Chook, chook, chook. . . .

KULIGIN.¹³ [*Gaily. This scene played at the table in the dining-room back of the column.*] Your health, Colonel! I am a schoolmaster and one of the family here, Masha's husband . . . She is very kind really, very kind. . . .

VERSHININ. I'll have some of this dark-coloured vodka. . . .

[*Drinks.*] To your health! [*To OLGA.*] I feel so happy with all of you!

[*No one is left in the drawing-room but IRINA and TUSENBACH.*]

IRINA. [*On sofa. TUSENBACH is still in chair by piano.*] Masha is in low spirits today. She was married at eighteen, when she thought him the cleverest of men. But now it's not the same. He is the kindest of men, but he is not the cleverest.

OLGA. [*At ANDREY's door and back to drawing-room impatiently.*] Andrey, do come!

ANDREY. [*Behind the scenes.*] I am coming. [*Comes in and goes to the table.*]

TUSENBACH. What are you thinking about?

IRINA. Nothing. I don't like that Solyony of yours, I am afraid of him. He keeps on saying such stupid things. . . .

TUSENBACH. He is a queer man. I am sorry for him and annoyed by him, but more sorry. I think he is shy. . . . When one is alone with him he is very intelligent and friendly, but in company he is rude, a bully. [*IRINA rises. TUSENBACH rises also, he makes her sit again.*] Don't go yet, let them sit down to the table. [*TUSENBACH sits by IRINA on sofa.*] Let me be by you. What are you thinking of? [*A pause.*] You are twenty, I am not yet thirty. How many years have we got before us, a long, long chain of days full of my love for you. . . .

IRINA. Nikolay Lvovitch, don't talk to me about love.

TUSENBACH. [*Not listening.*] I have a passionate craving for life, for struggle, for work, and that craving is mingled in my soul with my love for you, Irina, and just because you are beautiful it seems to me that life too is beautiful! What are you thinking of?

IRINA. You say life is beautiful. . . . Yes, but what if it only seems so! Life for us three sisters has not been beautiful yet, we have been stifled by it as plants are choked by weeds. . . . I am crying. . . . I mustn't do that. [*Hurriedly wipes her eyes and smiles.*] I must work, I must work. The reason we are depressed and take such a gloomy view of life is that we

know nothing of work. We come of people who despised work. . . .

[Enter NATALYA IVANOVNA; she is wearing a pink dress with a green sash.]

[TUSENBACH and IRINA rise. IRINA crosses to right of table.]

NATASHA. They are sitting down to lunch already. . . . I am late . . . [Steals a glance at herself in the glass and sets herself to rights.] I think my hair is all right. [Seeing IRINA who is at left of table.] Dear Irina Sergeyevna, I congratulate you! [Gives her a vigorous and prolonged kiss. IRINA goes into dining-room.] You have a lot of visitors, I really feel shy. . . . [Crosses D. L.] Good day, Baron!

[TUSENBACH follows IRINA between table and sofa.]

OLGA. [Coming into the drawing-room.] Well, here is Natalya Ivanovna! How are you, my dear? [Kisses her.]

NATASHA. Congratulations on the name-day. You have such a big party and I feel awfully shy. . . .

OLGA. Nonsense, we have only our own people. [In an undertone, in alarm.] You've got a green sash! My dear, that's not nice!

NATASHA. Why, is that a bad omen?

OLGA. No, it's only that it doesn't go with your dress . . . and it looks queer. . . .

NATASHA. [In a tearful voice.] Really? But you know it's not green exactly, it's more a dead colour. [Follows OLGA into the dining-room.]

[In the dining-room they are all sitting down to lunch; there is no one in the drawing-room.]

KULIGIN. I wish you a good husband, Irina. It's time for you to think of getting married.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Natalya Ivanovna, I hope we may hear of your engagement, too.

KULIGIN. Natalya Ivanovna has got a suitor already.

MASHA. [Strikes her plate with her fork.] Ladies and gentlemen, I want to make a speech!

KULIGIN. You deserve three bad marks for conduct.

VERSHININ. How nice this cordial is! What is it made of?

SOLYONY. Cockroaches.

IRINA. [*In a tearful voice.*] Ugh, ugh! How disgusting.

OLGA. We are going to have roast turkey and apple pie for supper. Thank God I am at home all day and this evening I shall be at home. . . . Please, all of you, won't you come this evening?

VERSHININ. Allow me to come too.

IRINA. Please do.

NATASHA. They don't stand on ceremony.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Nature our hearts for love created! [*Laughs.*]

ANDREY. [*Angrily.*] Do leave off, I wonder you are not tired of it!

[*FEDOTIK and RODDEY come in with a big basket of flowers.*]

FEDOTIK. [*Right center.*] I say, they are at lunch already.

RODDEY. [*Enters left center. Speaking loudly, with a lisp.*]

At lunch? Yes, they are at lunch already. . . .

FEDOTIK. [*RODDEY joins him, business with camera.*] Wait a minute. [*Takes a snapshot.*] One! Wait another minute . . .

[*Takes another snapshot.*] Two! Now it's ready. [*They take the basket and walk into the dining-room, where they are greeted noisily.*]

RODDEY. [*Goes to dining-room, meets IRINA. Shakes hands.*

IRINA then poses on left end of steps. Loudly.] My congratulations! I wish you everything, everything! The weather is delightful, perfectly magnificent. I've been out all the morning for a walk with the high-school boys. I teach them gymnastics.

FEDOTIK. You may move, Irina Sergeyevna, you may move.

[*Taking a photograph.*] You look charming today. [*Taking a top out of his pocket.*] Here is a top, by the way. . . . It has a wonderful note . . .

IRINA. How lovely!

MASHA. By the sea-strand an oak-tree green. . . . Upon that oak a chain of gold . . . [*Complainingly.*] Why do I keep saying that? That phrase has been haunting me all day. . . .

KULIGIN. Thirteen at table!

RODDEY. [*Center of dining-room table. FEDOTIK at left end of table. Loudly.*] Surely you do not attach importance to such superstitions? [*Laughter.*]

KULIGIN. If there are thirteen at table, it means that someone

present is in love. It's not you, Ivan Romanovitch, by any chance? [*Laughter.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. I am an old sinner, but why Natalya Ivanovna is overcome, I can't imagine . . .

[*Loud laughter, NATASHA runs out from the dining-room into the drawing-room, followed by ANDREY.*]

ANDREY. [*Both left of piano.*] Come, don't take any notice! Wait a minute . . . stop, I entreat you. . . .

NATASHA. I am ashamed. . . . I don't know what's the matter with me and they make fun of me. I know it's improper for me to leave the table like this, but I can't help it. . . . I can't . . . [*Covers her face with her hands.*]

ANDREY. My dear girl, I entreat you, I implore you, don't be upset. I assure you they are only joking, they do it in all kindness. My dear, my sweet, they are all kind, warm-hearted people and they are fond of me and of you. Come here to the window, here they can't see us . . . [*Crosses to keyboard. Looks round.*]

NATASHA. I am so unaccustomed to society! . . .

ANDREY. Oh youth, lovely, marvellous youth! My dear, my sweet, don't be so distressed! Believe me, believe me. . . . I feel so happy, my soul is full of love and rapture. . . . Oh, they can't see us, they can't see us! Why, why I love you, when I first loved you—oh, I don't know. My dear, my sweet, pure one, be my wife! I love you, I love you . . . as I have never loved anyone . . . [*A kiss: laughter and cries from dining-room.*]

[*FEDOTIK and RODDEY come in and seeing the pair kissing, stop in amazement. FEDOTIK takes photo.*]

ACT TWO

[*The same scene as in the First Act. Eight o'clock in the evening. Behind the scenes in the street there is the faintly audible sound of a concertina. There is no light. NATASHA IVANOVNA enters in a dressing-gown, carrying a candle; she comes in and stops at the door leading to ANDREY'S room.*]

NATASHA.¹ What are you doing, Andryusha? Reading? Never mind, I only just asked . . . [*Goes and opens another door and, peeping into it, shuts it again.*] Is there a light?

ANDREY. [*Enters with a book in his hand.*] What is it, Natasha?

NATASHA. I was looking to see whether there was a light. . . . It's Carnival, the servants are not themselves; one has always to be on the lookout for fear something goes wrong. Last night at twelve o'clock I passed through the dining-room, and there was a candle left burning. I couldn't find out who had lighted it. [*Puts down the candle. Lights lamp on piano.*] What's the time?

ANDREY. [*Looking at his watch.*] A quarter past eight.

NATASHA. [*Hands on back of chair right of table.*] And Olga and Irina aren't in yet. Still at work, poor dears. Olga is at the teachers' council and Irina at the telegraph office . . . [*Sighs.*] I was saying to your sister this morning, [*Moves candle.*] "Take care of yourself, Irina darling," said I. But she won't listen. A quarter past eight, you say? [*Crosses to right of piano.*] I am afraid our Bobik is not at all well. Why is he so cold? Yesterday he was feverish and today he is cold all over. . . . I am so anxious!

[*Step at door left.*]

ANDREY. It's all right, Natasha. The boy is quite well.

NATASHA. [*Tidies music on piano.*] We had better be careful about his food, anyway. I am anxious. And I am told that

the mummers are going to be here for the Carnival at nine o'clock this evening. It would be better for them not to come. Andryusha.

ANDREY. I really don't know. They've been invited, you know.

NATASHA. [*Left of piano.*] Baby woke up this morning, looked at me, and all at once he gave a smile; so he knew me. "Good morning, Bobik!" said I. "Good morning, darling!" And he laughed. Children understand; they understand very well. So I shall tell them, Andryusha, not to let the Carnival party come in.

ANDREY. [*Irresolutely.*] That's for my sisters to say. It's for them to give orders.

NATASHA. Yes, for them too; I will speak to them. They are so kind . . . [*Is going.*] I've ordered junket for supper. [*Crosses to table.*] The doctor says you must eat nothing but junket, or you will never get thinner. [*Stops. Sits right of table.*] Bobik is cold. I am afraid his room is chilly, perhaps. We ought to put him in a different room till the warm weather comes, anyway. Irina's room, for instance, is just right for a nursery; it's dry and the sun shines there all day. I must tell her; she might share Olga's room for the time . . . She is never at home, anyway, except for the night. [*Takes candle up to steps and back to him.*] . . . [*A pause.*] Andryushantchik, why don't you speak?

ANDREY. Nothing. I was thinking. . . . Besides, I have nothing to say.

NATASHA. Yes . . . what was it I meant to tell you? . . . Oh, yes; Ferapont has come from the Rural Board, and is asking for you. [*Crosses up to steps.*]

ANDREY. [*Crosses to chair by piano and reads. Yawns.*] Send him in.

[NATASHA goes out; ANDREY bending down to the candle which she has left behind, reads. Enter FERAPONT; he wears an old shabby overcoat, with the collar turned up, and has a scarf over his ears.]

ANDREY. Good evening, my good man. What is it?

FERAPONT. [*Up center.*] The Chairman has sent a book and a paper of some sort here . . . [*Gives the book and an envelope.*]

ANDREY. Thanks. Very good. But why have you come so late?
It is past eight.

FERAPONT. Eh?

ANDREY. [*Louder.*] I say, you have come late. It is past eight o'clock.

FERAPONT. Just so. I came before it was dark, but they wouldn't let me see you. The master is busy, they tell me. Well, of course, if you are busy, I am in no hurry. [*Thinking that ANDREY has asked him a question.*] Eh?

ANDREY. Nothing. [*Examines the book.*] Tomorrow is Friday. We haven't a sitting, but I'll come all the same . . . and do my work. It's dull at home . . . [*A pause.*] How strangely life changes and deceives one! Today I was so bored and had nothing to do, so I picked up this book—old university lectures—and I laughed . . . Good God! I am the secretary of the Rural Board of which Protopopov is the chairman. I am the secretary, and the most I can hope for is to become a member of the Board! Me, a member of the local Rural Board, while I dream every night I am professor of the University of Moscow—a distinguished man, of whom all Russia is proud!

FERAPONT. I can't say, sir. . . . I don't hear well. . . .

ANDREY. If you did hear well, perhaps I should not talk to you. I must talk to somebody, and my wife does not understand me. My sisters I am somehow afraid of—I'm afraid they will laugh at me and make me ashamed. . . . I don't drink, I am not fond of restaurants, but how I should love to be in Moscow sitting at Tyestov's in Moscow at this moment.

FERAPONT. [*Down a step.*] A contractor was saying at the Board the other day that there were some merchants in Moscow eating pancakes; one who ate forty, it seems, died. It was either forty or fifty, I don't remember.

ANDREY. In Moscow you sit in a huge room at a restaurant; you know no one and no one knows you, and at the same time you don't feel a stranger. . . . But here you know everyone and everyone knows you, and yet you are a stranger—and lonely. . . .

FERAPONT. Eh? [*A pause.*] And the same contractor says—

maybe it's not true—that there's a rope stretched right across Moscow.

ANDREY. What for?

FERAPONT. I can't say, sir. The contractor said so.

ANDREY. Nonsense. [*Reads.*] Have you ever been in Moscow?

FERAPONT. [*After a pause.*] No, never. It was not God's will I should. [*A pause.*] Am I to go?

ANDREY. You can go. Good-bye. [FERAPONT *goes out via dining-room.*] Good-bye. [*Reading.*] Come tomorrow morning and take some papers here. . . . Go. . . . [*A pause.*] He has gone. [*A ring.*] Yes, it is a business. . . . [*Stretches and goes slowly into his own room.*]

[*Behind the scenes a NURSE is singing, rocking a baby to sleep. Enter MASHA and VERSHININ. While they are talking a MAIDSERVANT is lighting a lamp and candles in the dining-room.*]

MASHA. [*Sits sofa. VERSHININ stands above table.*] I don't know. [*A pause.*] I don't know. Of course habit does a great deal. After father's death, for instance, it was a long time before we could get used to having no orderlies in the house. But apart from habit, I think it's a feeling of justice makes me say so. Perhaps it is not so in other places, but in our town the most decent, honourable, and well-bred people are all in the army.

VERSHININ. I am thirsty. I should like some tea.

MASHA. [*Glancing at the clock.*] They will soon be bringing it. I was married when I was eighteen, and I was afraid of my husband because he was a teacher, and I had only just left school. In those days I thought him an awfully learned, clever, and important person. And now it is not the same, unfortunately . . .

VERSHININ. [*Sits edge of table.*] Yes. . . . I see. . . .

MASHA. I am not speaking of my husband—I am used to him; but among civilians generally there are so many rude, ill-mannered, badly-brought-up people. Rudeness upsets and distresses me; I am unhappy when I see that a man is not refined, not gentle, not polite enough. When I have to be among the teachers, my husband's colleagues, it makes me quite miserable.

VERSHININ. [*Up and round to piano and back. Sits above her on sofa.*] Yes. . . . But, to my mind, it makes no difference whether they are civilians or military men—they are equally uninteresting, in this town anyway. It's all the same! If one listens to a man of the educated class here, civilian or military, he is worried to death by his wife, worried to death by his house, worried to death by his estate, worried to death by his horse. . . . A Russian is peculiarly given to exalted ideas, but why is it he always falls so short in life? Why?

MASHA. Why?

VERSHININ. Why is he worried to death by his children and by his wife? And why are his wife and children worried to death by him?

MASHA. You are rather depressed this evening.

VERSHININ. Perhaps. . . . I've had no dinner today, and had nothing to eat since the morning. My daughter is not quite well, and when my little girls are ill I am consumed by anxiety; my conscience reproaches me for having given them such a mother. Oh, if you had seen her today! She is a wretched creature! We began quarrelling at seven o'clock in the morning, and at nine I slammed the door and went away. [*A pause.*] I never talk about it. Strange, it's only to you I complain. [*Kisses her hand.*] Don't be angry with me. . . . [*Sits above her.*] Except for you I have no one—no one. . . . [*A pause.*]

MASHA. What a noise in the stove! Before father died there was howling in the chimney. There, just like that.

VERSHININ. Are you superstitious?

MASHA. Yes.

VERSHININ. That's strange. [*Kisses her hand.*] You are a splendid, wonderful woman. Splendid! Wonderful! It's dark, but I see the light in your eyes.

MASHA. [*Crosses to chair by piano before speaking. Moves to another chair.*] It's lighter here.

VERSHININ. [*Still on sofa, left.*] I love you—love, love. . . . I love your eyes, your movements, I see them in my dreams. . . . Splendid, wonderful woman!

MASHA. [*Laughing softly.*] When you talk to me like that, for some reason I laugh, though I am frightened. . . . Please

don't do it again . . . [*In an undertone.*] You may say it, though; I don't mind . . . [VERSHININ *crosses to her. Covers her face with her hands.*] I don't mind. . . . Someone is coming. Talk of something else. [*By window. VERSHININ in chair by piano.*]

[IRINA and TUSENBACH *come in through the dining-room.*]

TUSENBACH. I've got a three-barrelled name. My name is Baron Tusenbach-Krone-Altschauer, but I belong to the Orthodox Church and am just as Russian as you. There is very little of the German left in me—nothing, perhaps, but the patience and perseverance with which I bore you. I see you home every evening.

IRINA. [*Sits sofa.*] How tired I am!

TUSENBACH. [*Sits above her.*] And every day I will come to the telegraph office and see you home. I'll do it for ten years, for twenty years, till you drive me away . . . [MASHA *crosses to table. Seeing MASHA and VERSHININ, delightedly.*] Oh, it's you! How are you?

IRINA. Well, I am home at last. [*To MASHA. MASHA sits right of table.*] A lady came just now to telegraph to her brother in Saratov that her son died today, and she could not think of the address. So she sent it without an address—simply to Saratov. She was crying. And I was rude to her for no sort of reason. Told her I had no time to waste. It was so stupid. Are the Carnival people coming tonight?

MASHA. Yes.

IRINA. [*Sits down in an arm-chair.*] I must rest. I am tired. [*Sits on sofa.*]

TUSENBACH. [*With a smile.*] When you come from the office you seem so young, so forlorn . . . [*A pause.*]

IRINA. I am tired. No, I don't like telegraph work, I don't like it.

[*Maid brings lamp to center table.*]

MASHA. You've grown thinner . . . [*Crosses to IRINA. Whistles.*] And you look rather like a boy in the face. [*Crosses up to steps and back to table.*]

TUSENBACH. That's the way she does her hair.

IRINA. I must find some other job, this does not suit me. What

I so longed for, what I dreamed of is the very thing that it's lacking in. . . . It is work without poetry, without meaning. . . . [*A knock on the floor.*] There's the doctor knocking. . . . [*To TUSENBACH.*] Do knock, dear. . . . I can't. . . . I am tired.

[*TUSENBACH knocks on the floor.*]

IRINA. He will come directly. We ought to do something about it. The doctor and our Andrey were at the Club yesterday and they lost again. I am told Andrey lost two hundred roubles.

MASHA. [*Indifferently. Sits above table.*] Well, it can't be helped now.

IRINA. A fortnight ago he lost money, in December he lost money. I wish he'd make haste and lose everything, then perhaps we should go away from this town. My God, every night I dream of Moscow, it's perfect madness. [*Laughs.*] We'll move there in June and there is still left February, March, April, May . . . almost half a year.

MASHA. The only thing is Natasha must not hear of his losses.

IRINA. I don't suppose she cares.

[*TCHEBUTYKIN. Enters from door left—he has been resting after dinner—comes into the dining-room combing his beard, then sits down to the table and takes a newspaper out of his pocket.*]

MASHA. [*In chair above table.*] Here he is . . . has he paid his rent?

IRINA. [*Laughs.*] No. Not a kopeck for eight months. Evidently he has forgotten.

MASHA. [*Laughs.*] How gravely he sits. [*They all laugh; a pause.*]

IRINA. Why are you so quiet, Alexander Ignatyevitch?

VERSHININ. I don't know. I am looking for tea. I'd give half my life for a glass of tea. I have had nothing to eat since the morning.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Irina Sergeyevna!

IRINA. What is it?

TCHEBUTYKIN. Come here. *Venez ici.* [*IRINA goes and sits down at the table in dining-room.*] I can't do without you.

[IRINA *lays out the cards for patience.*]

VERSHININ. Well, if they won't bring tea, let us discuss something.

TUSENBACH. By all means. What?

VERSHININ. What? Let us dream . . . for instance of the life that will come after us, in two or three hundred years.
[*Crosses between table and sofa.*]

TUSENBACH. Well? When we are dead, men will fly in balloons, change the fashion of their coats, will discover a sixth sense, perhaps, and develop it, but life will remain just the same, difficult, full of mysteries and happiness. In a thousand years man will sigh just the same, "Ah, how hard life is," and yet just as now he will be afraid of death and not want it.

VERSHININ. [*Walking about room. After a moment's thought.*]
Well, I don't know. . . . It seems to me that everything on earth is bound to change by degrees and is already changing before our eyes. In two or three hundred, perhaps in a thousand years—the time does not matter—a new, happy life will come. We shall have no share in that life, of course, but we are living for it, we are working, well, yes, and suffering for it, we are creating it—and that alone is the purpose of our existence, and is our happiness, if you like.

[MASHA *laughs softly.*]

TUSENBACH. What is it?

MASHA. I don't know. I've been laughing all day.

VERSHININ. I was at the same school as you were, I did not go to the Military Academy; I read a great deal, but I do not know how to choose my books, and very likely I read quite the wrong things, and yet the longer I live the more I want to know. My hair is turning grey, I am almost an old man, but I know so little, oh so little! But all the same I fancy that I do know and thoroughly grasp what is essential and matters most. And how I should like to make you see that there is no happiness for us, that there ought not to be and will not be. . . . We must work and work, and happiness is the portion of our remote descendants. [*A pause.*] If it is not for me, at least it is for the descendants of my descendants. . . .

[FEDOTIK and RODDEY appear in the dining-room; they sit down and sing softly, playing the guitar.]

TUSENBACH. You think it's no use even dreaming of happiness! But what if I am happy? [Crossing up and down.]

VERSHININ. No.

TUSENBACH. [Flinging up his hands and laughing.] It is clear we don't understand each other. Well, how am I to convince you? [MASHA laughs softly. TUSENBACH holds up a finger to her.] Laugh! [To VERSHININ.] Not only in two or three hundred years but in a million years life will be just the same; it does not change, it remains stationary, following its own laws which we have nothing to do with or which, anyway, we shall never find out. Migratory birds, cranes for instance, fly backwards and forwards, and whatever ideas, great or small, stray through their minds, they will still go on flying just the same without knowing where or why. They fly and will continue to fly, however philosophical they may become; and it doesn't matter *how* philosophical they are so long as they go on flying! . . .

MASHA. But still there is a meaning?

TUSENBACH. Meaning. . . . Here it is snowing. What meaning is there in that? [A pause.]

MASHA. I think man ought to have faith or ought to seek a faith, or else his life is empty, empty. . . . To live and not to understand why cranes fly; why children are born; why there are stars in the sky. . . . One must *know* what one is living for or else it is all nonsense and waste. [A pause.]

VERSHININ. And yet one is sorry that youth is over. . . .

MASHA. Gogol says: it's dull living in this world, gentlemen.

TUSENBACH. And I say: it is difficult to argue with you, gentlemen. God bless you . . . [Rises, crosses up to steps.]

TCHEBUTYKIN. [Reading the newspaper.] Balzac was married at Berditchev.

[IRINA hums softly.]

TCHEBUTYKIN. I really must put that down in my book. [Writes.] Balzac was married at Berditchev. [Reads the paper.]

IRINA. [Lays out the cards for patience, dreamily.] Balzac was married at Berditchev.

TUSENBACH. [*To right of MASHA.*] The die is cast. You know, Marya Sergeyevna, I've resigned my commission.

MASHA. So I hear. And I see nothing good in that. I don't like civilians.

TUSENBACH. Never mind . . . [*Gets up.*] I am not good enough for a soldier. But that does not matter, though . . . I am going to work. If only for one day in my life, to work so that I come home at night tired out and fall asleep as soon as I get into bed . . . [*Going into the dining-room.*] Workmen must sleep soundly!

FEDOTIK. [*To IRINA.*] I bought these chalks for you just now as I passed the shop. . . . And this penknife. . . .

IRINA. You've got into the way of treating me as though I were little, but I am grown up, you know . . . [*Takes the chalks and the penknife, joyfully.*] How lovely!

FEDOTIK. And I bought a knife for myself . . . look . . . one blade, and another blade, a third, and this is for the ears, and here are scissors, and that's for cleaning the nails. . . .

RODDEY. [*Loudly.*] Doctor, how old are you?

TCHEBUTYKIN. I? Thirty-two. [*Laughter.*]

FEDOTIK. I'll show you another patience . . . [*Lays out the cards.*]

[*The samovar is brought in; ANFISA is at the samovar; a little later NATASHA comes in from kitchen, and is also busy at the table; SOLYONY comes in, and after greeting the others sits down at the table.*]

VERSHININ. What a wind there is!

MASHA. Yes. I am sick of the winter. I've forgotten what summer is like.

IRINA. It's coming out right, I see. We shall go to Moscow.

FEDOTIK. No, it's not coming out. You see, the eight is over the two of spades. [*Laughs.*] So that means you won't go to Moscow.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Reads from the newspaper.*] Tsi-tsi-kar. Smallpox is raging there.

ANFISA. [*Going up to MASHA.*] Masha, come to tea, my dear. [*To VERSHININ.*] Come your honour . . . excuse me, sir, I have forgotten your name. . . .

MASHA. Bring it here, nurse, I am not going there.

IRINA. Nurse!

ANFISA. I am coming!

NATASHA. [*To SOLYONY.*] Little babies understand very well. "Good morning, Bobik, good morning, darling," I said. He looked at me in quite a special way. You think I say that because I am a mother, but no, I assure you! He is an extraordinary child.

SOLYONY. If that child were mine, I'd fry him in a frying-pan and eat him. [*Takes his glass, comes into the drawing-room and sits down in a corner. R.*]

NATASHA. [*Covers her face with her hands.*] Rude, ill-bred man!

MASHA. Happy people don't notice whether it is winter or summer. I fancy if I lived in Moscow I should not mind what the weather was like. . . .

VERSHININ. The other day I was reading the diary of a French minister written in prison. The minister was condemned for the Panama affair. With what enthusiasm and delight he describes the birds he sees from the prison window, which he never noticed before when he was a minister. Now that he is released, of course he notices birds no more than he did before. In the same way, you won't notice Moscow when you live in it. We have no happiness and never do have, we only long for it. [*ANFISA crosses to MASHA and VERSHININ with letter and tea.*]

TUSENBACH. [*At piano. Takes a box from the table.*] What has become of the sweets?

IRINA. Solyony has eaten them.

TUSENBACH. [*Sits chair by piano.*] All?

ANFISA. [*Handing tea.*] There's a letter for you, sir.

VERSHININ. For me? [*Takes the letter.*] From my daughter. [*Reads.*] Yes, of course. [*Rises.*] . . . Excuse me, Marya Sergeyevna, I'll slip away. I won't have tea. [*Gets up in agitation.*] Always these upsets. . . .

MASHA. What is it? Not a secret?

VERSHININ. [*In a low voice.*] My wife has taken poison again. I must go. I'll slip off unnoticed. Horribly unpleasant it all is. [*Kisses MASHA's hand.*] My fine, dear, splendid

woman. . . . I'll go this way without being seen. . . .

[*Goes out.*]

ANFISA. [*With plate of sandwiches.*] Where is he off to? I've just given him his tea. . . . What a man.

MASHA. [*SOLYONY crosses to sofa. Sits. Getting angry.*] Leave off! Don't pester, you give one no peace. . . . [*Goes with her cup to the table.*] You bother me, old lady.

ANFISA. Why are you so huffy, darling? [*ANDREY'S voice: "ANFISA!"*]

ANFISA. [*Mimicking.*] Anfisa! he sits there. . . . [*Goes out L. C.*]

MASHA. [*By the table in the dining-room, angrily.*] Let me sit down! [*Mixes the cards on the table.*] You take up all the table with your cards. Drink your tea!

IRINA. How cross you are, Masha!

MASHA. If I'm cross, don't talk to me. Don't interfere with me.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Laughing.*] Don't touch her, don't touch her!

MASHA. You are sixty, but you talk rot like a schoolboy.

NATASHA. [*Sighs.*] Dear Masha, why make use of such expressions in conversation? With your attractive appearance I tell you straight out, you would be simply fascinating in a well-bred social circle if it were not for the things you say. *Je vous prie, pardonnez-moi, Marie, mais vous avez des manieres un peu grossières.*

TUSENBACH. [*Rises goes into dining-room suppressing a laugh.*] Give me . . . give me . . . I think there is some brandy there.

NATASHA. *Il paraît que mon Bobik déjà ne dort pas*, he is awake. He is not well today. I must go to him, excuse me. . . . [*Goes out. Kitchen.*]

IRINA. Where has Alexander Ignatyevitch gone?

MASHA. Home. Something queer with his wife again.

TUSENBACH. [*Goes up to SOLYONY who is on sofa, with a decanter of brandy in his hand.*] You always sit alone, thinking, and there's no making out what you think about. Come, let us make it up. Let us have a drink of brandy. [*They drink.*] I shall have to play the piano all night, I suppose, play all sorts of trash. . . . Here goes! [*Sits above SOLYONY.*]

SOLYONY. Why make it up? I haven't quarrelled with you.

TUSENBACH. You always make me feel as though something had gone wrong between us. You are a queer character, there's no denying that.

SOLYONY. [*Declaims.*] I am strange, who is not strange! Be not wrath, Aleko!

TUSENBACH. I don't see what Aleko has got to do with it. . . .

SOLYONY. When I am *tête-à-tête* with somebody, I am all right, just like anyone else, but in company I am depressed, ill at ease and . . . say all sorts of idiotic things, but at the same time I am more conscientious and straightforward than many. And I can prove it. . . .

TUSENBACH. I often feel angry with you, you are always attacking me when we are in company, and yet I somehow like you. Here goes, I am going to drink a lot today. [*Gets drink from table. Sits on edge of table.*] Let's drink!

SOLYONY. Let us. [*Drinks.*] I have never had anything against you, Baron. But I have the temperament of Lermontov. [*In a low voice.*] In fact I am rather like Lermontov to look at . . . so I am told. [*Takes out scent-bottle and sprinkles scent on his hands.*]

TUSENBACH. I have sent in my papers. I've had enough of it! I have been thinking of it for five years and at last I have come up to the scratch. I am going to work.

SOLYONY. [*Declaims.*] Be not wrath, Aleko. . . . Forget, forget thy dreams. . . .

[*While they are talking ANDREY comes in quietly with a book and sits down by a candle. Chair by piano.*]

TUSENBACH. I am going to work. [*Crosses to piano stool.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Coming into the drawing-room with IRINA, crosses to table, IRINA brings cards. IRINA sits R. of table between table and sofa.*] And the food too was real Caucasian stuff: onion soup and for the meat course *tchehartma*. . . .

SOLYONY. *Tcheremsha* is not meat at all, it's a plant rather like our onion.

TCHEBUTYKIN. No, my dear soul. It's not onion, but mutton roasted in a special way.

SOLYONY. But I tell you that *tcheremsha* is an onion.

TCHEBUTYKIN. And I tell you that *tchehartma* is mutton.

SOLYONY. And I tell you that *tcheremsha* is an onion.

TCHEBUTYKIN. What's the use of my arguing with you? You have never been to the Caucasus or eaten *tchehartma*.

SOLYONY. I haven't eaten it because I can't bear it. *Tcheremsha* smells like garlic. [*Crosses R.* TCHEBUTYKIN goes to chair *U. L. and to top of piano.*]

ANDREY. [*Imploringly.*] That's enough! Please!

TUSENBACH. When are the Carnival party coming?

IRINA. They promised to come at nine, so they will be here directly.

TUSENBACH. [*Embraces ANDREY.*] "Oh my porch, oh my new porch . . ."

ANDREY. [*Dances and sings.*] "With posts of maple wood. . ."

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Dances.*] "And lattice work complete. . ."
[*Laughter.*]

TUSENBACH. [*Kisses ANDREY.*] Hang it all, let us have a drink. Andryusha, let us drink to our everlasting friendship. I'll go to the University when you do, Andryusha.

SOLYONY. Which? There are two universities in Moscow.

ANDREY. There is only one university in Moscow.

SOLYONY. I tell you there are two.

ANDREY. There may be three for aught I care. So much the better.

SOLYONY. There are two universities in Moscow! [*A murmur and hisses.*] There are two universities in Moscow; the old one and the new one. And if you don't care to hear, if what I say irritates you, I can keep quiet. I can even go into another room. [*Goes out at one of the doors via dining-room.*]

TUSENBACH. Bravo, bravo! [*Laughs.*] Friend, begin, I'll sit down and play! Funny fellow that Solyony. . . [*Sits down at the piano and plays a waltz.*]

MASHA. [*By piano. Dances a waltz alone.*] The baron is drunk, the baron is drunk, the baron is drunk.

[*Enter NATASHA.*]

NATASHA. [*To TCHEBUTYKIN.*] Ivan Romanitch! [*Crosses to table. Says something to TCHEBUTYKIN, then goes out softly.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN *touches TUSENBACH on the shoulder and whispers something to him.*

IRINA. [MASHA L. of table.] What is it?

TCHEBUTYKIN. [At piano.] It's time we were going. Good-night.

TUSENBACH. [Crosses to door L.] Good-night. It's time to be going.

IRINA. . . . What about the Carnival party?

ANDREY.² [To IRINA. With embarrassment.] They won't be coming. You see, dear, Natasha says Bobik is not well; and so . . . In fact I know nothing about it, and don't care either. [Crosses to his room. TCHEBUTYKIN goes with him. IRINA stamps foot and comes down.]

IRINA. Bobik is not well.

MASHA. [Crosses L. C.] Well, it's not the first time we've had to lump it! If we are turned out, we must go. [To IRINA.] It's not Bobik that is ill, but she is a bit . . . [Taps forehead with her finger.] Petty, vulgar creature!

FEDOTIK. What a pity! I was meaning to spend the evening, but of course if the child is ill . . . I'll bring him a toy to-morrow.

RODDEY. [Comes into room. Loudly.] I had a nap today after dinner on purpose, I thought I would be dancing all night. . . . Why, it's only nine o'clock.

MASHA. Let us go into the street; there we can talk. We'll decide what to do.

[Sounds of "Good-bye! Good-night!" The good-humoured laugh of TUSENBACH is heard. All go out. ANFISA and the maidservant clear the table and put out the light. There is the sound of the nurse singing. ANDREY in his hat and coat, and TCHEBUTYKIN come in quietly.]

TCHEBUTYKIN. I never had time to get married, because life has flashed by like lightning and because I was passionately in love with your mother, who was married.

ANDREY. One shouldn't get married. One shouldn't, because it's boring.

TCHEBUTYKIN. That's all very well, but what about loneliness? Say what you like, it's a dreadful thing to be lonely, my dear boy. . . . But no matter, though!

ANDREY. [*Grabs TCHEBUTYKIN's hand.*] Let's make haste and go.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Rises.*] What's the hurry? We have plenty of time.

ANDREY. I am afraid my wife may stop me.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Oh!

ANDREY. I am not going to play today, I shall just sit and look on. I don't feel well. . . . What am I to do, Ivan Romanitch, I am so short of breath?

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Blowing through his pipe.*] It's no use asking me! I don't remember, dear boy. . . . I don't know. . . .

ANDREY. Let us go through the kitchen. [*They go out.*]

[*A ring, then another ring; there is a sound of voices and laughter.*]

IRINA. [*Enters.*] What is it?

ANFISA. [*In a whisper.*] The mummers, all dressed up. [*A ring.*]

IRINA. Nurse, dear, say there is no one at home. They must excuse us.

[*ANFISA goes out. IRINA walks about the room in hesitation; she is excited. Enter SOLYONY from D. R.*]

SOLYONY. [*In perplexity.*] No one here. . . . Where are they all?

IRINA. They have gone home.

SOLYONY. [*R. of table.*] How queer. Are you alone here?

IRINA. [*Crosses R. C.*] Yes. [*A pause.*] Good-night.

SOLYONY. [*Crosses end of piano.*] I behaved tactlessly, without sufficient restraint just now. But you are not like other people, you are pure and lofty, you see the truth. [*Steps to her.*] You can understand me. I love you, I love you deeply, infinitely.

IRINA. Good-night! You must go. [*Walks away from him. He follows her to table.*]

SOLYONY. I can't live without you. [*Following her.*] Oh, my bliss! [*Through his tears.*] Oh, happiness! Those glorious, exquisite, marvellous eyes such as I have never seen in any other woman.

IRINA. [*Crosses L. C. Coldly.*] Don't, Vassily Vassilyitch!

SOLYONY. [*R. of table.*] For the first time I am speaking of

love to you, and I feel as though I were not on earth but on another planet. [IRINA *upstage*. *Rubs his forehead.*] But there, it does not matter. There is no forcing kindness, of course. . . . But there must be no happy rivals. . . . There must not. . . . I swear by all that is sacred I will kill any rivals. [IRINA *crosses below table at end of sofa.*] . . . O exquisite being!

[NATASHA *passes with a candle from kitchen. She steps to R. He stands in her way. Both U. C.*]

NATASHA. [*Peeps in at one door, then at another and passes by the door that leads to her husband's room.*] Andrey is there. Let him read. Excuse me, Vassily Vassilyitch, I did not know you were here, and I am in my dressing-gown. . . .

SOLYONY. I don't care. Good-bye! [*Goes out.*]

[IRINA *sits chair by piano.*]

NATASHA. [*Above table, then to IRINA.*] You are tired, my poor, dear little girl! [*Kisses IRINA.*] You ought to go to bed earlier. . . .

IRINA. Is Bobik asleep?

NATASHA. He is asleep, but not sleeping quietly. By the way, dear, I keep meaning to speak to you, but either you are out or else I haven't the time. . . . I think Bobik's nursery is cold and damp. And your room is so nice for a baby. My sweet, my dear, you might move for a time into Olga's room!

IRINA. [*Not understanding.*] Where?

[*The sound of a three-horse sledge with bells driving up to the door.*]

NATASHA. [*Crosses to R. of table.*] You would be in the same room with Olga, and Bobik in your room. He is such a poppet. I said to him today, "Bobik, you are mine, you are mine!" and he looked at me with his funny little eyes. [*A ring.*] That must be Olga. How late she is! [*Crosses toward door L.*]

[*The MAID comes up from D. L. to NATASHA and whispers in her ear.*]

NATASHA. Protopopov? What a queer fellow he is! Protopopov has come, and asks me to go out with him in his sledge. [*Laughs.*] How strange men are! [*A ring.*] Somebody has come. I might go for a quarter of an hour. . . . [*To the*

- MAID.] Tell him I'll come directly. [*A ring.*] You hear . . . it must be Olga. [*Goes out via dining-room.*]
- [*The MAID runs out; IRINA sits lost in thought; KULIGIN, OLGA and VERSHININ come in. MAID follows them in and crosses to dining-room L. of sofa. OLGA on sofa.*]
- KULIGIN. Well this is a surprise! They said they were going to have an evening party.
- VERSHININ. Strange! And when I went away half an hour ago they were expecting the Carnival people. . . .
- IRINA. They have all gone.
- KULIGIN. [*Sits top of table.*] Has Masha gone too? Where has she gone? And why is Protopopov waiting below with his sledge? Whom is he waiting for?
- IRINA. Don't ask questions. . . . I am tired.
- KULIGIN. Oh, you little cross-patch.
- OLGA.³ The meeting is only just over. I am tired out. Our head-mistress is ill and I have to take her place. Oh, my head, my head does ache; oh, my head! [*Sits down.*] Andrey lost two hundred roubles yesterday at cards. . . . The whole town is talking about it. . . .
- KULIGIN. Yes, I am tired out by the meeting too. [*Sits down.*]
- VERSHININ. My wife took it into her head to give me a fright, she nearly poisoned herself. It's all right now, and I am glad, it's a relief. . . . So we are to go away? Very well, then, I will say good-night. [*Kisses OLGA's hand.*] Fyodor Ilyitch, let us go somewhere together! I can't stay at home, I absolutely can't. . . . Come along!
- KULIGIN. I am tired. I am not coming. [*Gets up.*] I am tired. Has my wife gone home?
- IRINA. I expect so.
- KULIGIN. [*Crosses to IRINA. Kisses IRINA's hand.*] Good-bye! I have all day tomorrow and next day to rest. Good-night! [*Going to top of sofa.*] I do want some tea. I was reckoning on spending the evening in pleasant company. . . . *O fallacem hominum spem!* . . . Accusative of exclamation.
- VERSHININ. Well, then, I must go alone. [*Goes out with KULIGIN, whistling.*]
- OLGA. My head aches, oh how my head aches. . . . Andrey has lost at cards. . . . The whole town is talking about it. . . .

I'll go and lie down. [*Crosses round top of table to R. C. Is going.*] Tomorrow I shall be free. . . . Oh, goodness, how nice that is! Tomorrow I am free and the day after I am free. . . . My head does ache, oh, my head. . . . [*Goes out dining-room.*]

IRINA. [*Alone.*] They have all gone away. There is no one left.

[*A concertina plays in the street, the NURSE sings.*]

NATASHA.⁴ [*In a fur cap and coat crosses the dining-room, followed by the MAID who carries her cloak.*] I shall be back in half an hour. I shall only go a little way. [*Goes out.*]

IRINA. [*Left alone, in dejection.*] Oh, to go to Moscow, to Moscow!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[*The bedroom of OLGA and IRINA. On left and right beds with screens round them. Past two o'clock in the night. Behind the scenes a bell is ringing on account of a fire in the town, which has been going on for some time. It can be seen that no one in the house has gone to bed yet. On the sofa MASHA is lying, dressed as usual in black. Enter OLGA and ANFISA.*]

ANFISA. [*Right center.*] They are sitting below, under the stairs . . . I said to them, "Come upstairs; why, you mustn't stay there"—they only cried. "We don't know where father is," they said. "What if he is burnt!" What an idea! And the poor souls in the yard . . . they are all undressed too.

OLGA. [*Crosses center. Taking clothes out of the cupboard.*] Take this grey dress . . . and this one . . . and the blouse too . . . and that skirt, nurse. . . . Oh dear, what a dreadful thing! Kirsanov Street is burnt to the ground, it seems. . . . Take this . . . take this . . . [*Throws clothes into her arms.*] The Vershinins have had a fright, poor things. . . . Their house was very nearly burnt. Let them stay the night here . . . we can't let them go home . . . Poor Fedotik has everything burnt, [*Right center behind screen.*] he has not a thing left. . . .

ANFISA. You had better call Ferapont, Olya darling. I can't carry it all. . . .

OLGA. [*Rings.*] No one will answer the bell. [*At the door.*] Come here, whoever is there! [*Behind screen gets clothes. Through the open door can be seen a window red with fire; the fire brigade is heard passing the house.*] How awful it is! And sickening!

[*Enter FERAPONT.*]

OLGA. Here, take these, carry them downstairs. . . . The Kolutilin young ladies are downstairs. . . . give it to them . . . and give this too.

FERAPONT. [*By door.*] Yes, miss. In 1812 Moscow was burnt too. . . . Mercy on us! The French marvelled.

OLGA. [*At table lower center.*] You can go now.

FERAPONT. Yes, miss. [*Goes out.*]

OLGA. [*Crosses to ANFISA.*] Nurse darling, give them everything. We don't want anything, give it all to them. . . . I am tired, I can hardly stand on my feet. . . . [*Sits on bed.*] We mustn't let the Vershinins go home. . . . The little girls can sleep in the drawing-room, and Alexander Ignatyevitch down below at the Baron's. . . . Fedotik can go to the Baron's, too, or sleep in our dining-room. . . . As ill-luck will have it, the doctor is drunk, frightfully drunk, and no one can be put in his room. And Vershinin's wife can be in the drawing-room, too.

ANFISA. [*Wearily.*] Olga darling, don't send me away, don't send me away!

OLGA. [*Rises.*] That's nonsense, nurse. No one is sending you away.

ANFISA. [*Lays her head on OLGA's shoulder.*] My own, my treasure, I work, I do my best. . . . I'm getting weak, everyone will say, "Be off!" And where am I to go? Where? I am eighty. Eighty-one.

OLGA. Sit down, nurse, darling. . . . You are tired, poor thing. . . . [*Makes her sit down on MASHA's sofa.*] Rest, dear good nurse. . . . How pale you are! [*Enter NATASHA, Right, with clean towel.*]

NATASHA. [*At washstand.*] They are saying we must form a committee at once for the assistance of those whose houses have been burnt. Well, that's a good idea. Indeed, one ought always to be ready to help the poor. It's the duty of the rich. [*At washstand tidying things on it.*] Bobik and baby Sophie are both asleep, sleeping as though nothing were happening. There are such a lot of people everywhere, wherever one goes, the house is full. There is influenza in the town now; I am so afraid the children may get it.

OLGA. [*Not listening.*] One does not see the fire in this room. It's quiet here. [*Sits on bed.*]

NATASHA. Yes. . . . my hair must be untidy. [*In front of the looking-glass over washstand, backs away from mirror.*] They say I have grown fatter. . . . but it's not true! Not a bit! Masha is asleep, she is tired out, poor dear. . . .

[*Crosses lower right of couch. To ANFISA, coldly.*] Don't dare to sit down in my presence! Get up! Go out of the room. [*ANFISA goes out; a pause.*] Why you keep that old woman, I can't understand! [*Crosses lower center.*]

OLGA. [*Taken aback.*] Excuse me, I don't understand either . . .

NATASHA. She is no use here. She is a peasant; she ought to be in the country. . . . You spoil people! I like order in the house! There ought to be no useless servants in the house. [*Strokes her cheek, sits next OLGA.*] You are tired, poor darling. Our head-mistress is tired! When baby Sophie is a big girl and goes to the high-school, I shall be afraid of you.

OLGA. I shan't be head-mistress.

NATASHA. You will be elected, Olga. That's a settled thing.

OLGA. I shall refuse. I can't . . . It's too much for me . . . [*Drinks water. Crosses to washstand.*] You were so rude to nurse just now. . . . Excuse me, I can't endure it. . . . It makes me feel faint. [*Drinks water.*]

NATASHA. [*Crosses to OLGA. Perturbed.*] Forgive me, Olga; forgive me. . . . I did not mean to hurt your feelings. [*MASHA gets up, takes her pillow, and goes out in a rage.*]

OLGA. You must understand, my dear, it may be that we have been strangely brought up, but I can't endure it. . . . Such an attitude oppresses me, it makes me ill. . . . I feel simply unnerved by it. . . . [*Crosses back to right center.*]

NATASHA. Forgive me; forgive me. . . .

OLGA. The very slightest rudeness, a tactless word, upsets me. . . .

NATASHA. [*Below bcd.*] I often say too much, that's true, but you must admit, dear, that she might just as well be in the country.

OLGA. She has been with us thirty years.

NATASHA. But now she can't work! Either I don't understand, or you won't understand me. She is not fit for work. She does nothing but sleep or sit still.

OLGA. Well, let her sit still.

NATASHA. [*Below chiffonier. Surprise.*] How, sit still? Why, she is a servant. [*Through tears.*] I don't understand you, Olga, I have a nurse to look after the children as well as

a wet nurse for baby, and we have a housemaid and a cook, what to do we want that old woman for? What's the use of her? [*The alarm rings behind the scenes.*]

OLGA. This night has made me ten years older. [*Crosses behind screen.*]

NATASHA. We must come to an understanding, Olga. You are at the high-school, I am at home; you are teaching while I look after the house, and if I say anything about the servants, I know what I'm talking about. I do know what I am talking about . . . And that old thief, that old hag. . . . [*Stamps.*] that old witch shall clear out of the house tomorrow! . . . I won't have people annoy me! I won't have it! [*Crosses right of table center throws herself on bed. Feeling that she has gone too far.*] Really, if you don't move downstairs, we shall always be quarrelling. It's awful. [*Back at washstand, then lower center, then sits left of OLGA's bed. Enter KULIGIN.*]

KULIGIN. Where is Masha? It's time to be going home. The fire is dying down, so they say. [*OLGA comes out from behind screen. Stretches.*] Only one part of the town has been burnt, in spite of the wind; it seemed at first as though the whole town would be destroyed. [*OLGA goes to cupboard. Sits down on MASHA's couch.*] I am exhausted. Olga, my dear . . . I often think if it had not been for Masha I should have married you. You are so good. . . . I am tired out. [*TCHEBUTYKIN heard off. OLGA looks at door. Listens.*]

OLGA. What is it?

KULIGIN. It is unfortunate the doctor should have a drinking bout just now; he is helplessly drunk. Most unfortunate. [*Gets up. OLGA crosses to right of washstand.*] Here he comes, I do believe. . . . Do you hear? Yes, he is coming this way. . . . [*Laughs.*] What a man he is, really . . . I shall hide. [*Goes to the cupboard and stands in the corner.*] Isn't he a ruffian?

OLGA. He has not been drunk for two years and look at him. [*Behind screen. Walks away with NATASHA to the back of the room.*]

[*TCHEBUTYKIN comes in; walking as though sober without staggering, he walks across the room, stops, looks around,*

then goes up to the washstand and begins to wash his hands.
 OLGA and NATASHA go out unnoticed by him.]

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Morosely.*] The devil take them all. . . . damn them all. They think I am a doctor, that I can treat all sorts of complaints, and I really know nothing about it, I have forgotten all I did know, I remember nothing, absolutely nothing. The devil take them. Last Wednesday I treated a woman at Zasyp—she died, and it's my fault that she died. Yes. . . . [*Knots towel.*] I did know something twenty-five years ago, but now I remember nothing, nothing. Perhaps I am not a man at all but only pretend to have arms and legs and head; perhaps I don't exist at all and only fancy that I walk about, eat and sleep. [*Weeps.*] Oh, if only I did not exist! [*Leaves off weeping, morosely. Wipes eyes with towel.*] I don't care! I don't care a scrap! [*A pause.*] The devil knows. . . . The day before yesterday there was a conversation at the club; they talked about Shakespeare, Voltaire. . . . [*Has made a figure of towel to which he addresses these words.*] I have read nothing, nothing at all, but I looked as though I had read them. And the others did the same as I did. The vulgarity! The meanness! [*Throws towel on floor.*] And that woman I killed on Wednesday came back to my mind . . . and it all came back to my mind and everything seemed nasty, disgusting and all awry in my soul. . . . I went and got drunk. . . .

[*Enter IRINA, VERSHININ and TUSENBACH; TUSENBACH is wearing a fashionable new civilian suit.*]

IRINA. [*Sits OLGA's bed.*] Let us sit here. No one will come here.

VERSHININ. [*Sits on MASHA's couch.*] If it hadn't been for the soldiers, the whole town would have been burnt down. Splendid fellows! [*Rubs his hands with pleasure.*] They are first-rate men! Splendid fellows!

KULIGIN. [*Coming from cupboard. Going up to them.*] What time is it?

TUSENBACH. [*In chair right.*] It's past three. It's getting light already.

IRINA. They are all sitting in the dining-room. No one seems to think of going. And that Solyony of yours is sitting there

too . . . [*To TCHEBUTYKIN who is picking up towel.*] You had better go to bed, Doctor.

TCHEBUTYKIN. It's all right. . . . Thank you! [*Combs his beard.*]

KULIGIN. [*To TCHEBUTYKIN. Laughs.*] You are a bit fuddled, Ivan Romanitch! [*Slaps him on the shoulder.*] Bravo! *In vino veritas*, as the ancients used to say. [*Turns to IRINA.*]

TUSENBACH. Everyone is asking me to get up a concert for the benefit of the families whose houses have been burnt down.

IRINA. Why, who is there? . . .

TUSENBACH. We could get it up, if we wanted to. Marya Sergeyevna plays the piano splendidly, to my thinking.

KULIGIN. [*Sits next IRINA. TCHEBUTYKIN is standing center of dresser.*] Yes, she plays splendidly.

IRINA. She has forgotten. She has not played for three . . . or four years.

TUSENBACH. There is absolutely no one who understands music in this town, not one soul, but I do understand and on my honour I assure you that Marya Sergeyevna plays magnificently, almost with genius.

KULIGIN. You are right, Baron. I am very fond of her. She is a good sort.

TUSENBACH. To be able to play so gloriously and to know that no one understands you!

KULIGIN. [*Sighs.*] Yes. . . . But would it be suitable for her to take part in a concert? [*A pause.*] I know nothing about it, my friends. Perhaps it would be all right. There is no denying that our director is a fine man, indeed a very fine man, very intelligent, but he has such views . . . Of course it is not his business, still if you like I'll speak to him about it.

[*TCHEBUTYKIN takes up a china clock and examines it.*]

VERSHININ. [*Sits side of MASHA's couch.*] I got dirty all over at the fire. I am a sight. [*A pause.*] I heard a word dropped yesterday about our brigade being transferred ever so far away. Some say to Poland, and others to Tchita.

TUSENBACH. I've heard something about it too. Well! The town will be a wilderness then.

IRINA. We shall go away too.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Drops the clock, which smashes. They all look towards him.*] To smithereens!

KULIGIN. [*Picking up the pieces.*] To smash such a valuable thing—oh, Ivan Romanitch, Ivan Romanitch! I should give you minus zero for conduct!

IRINA. [*Picking up pieces.*] That was mother's clock.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Gradually making for door. Right.*] Was it? . . . Well, if it was hers, it was. Perhaps I did not smash it, but it only seems as though I had. Perhaps it only seems to us that we exist, but really we are not here at all. I don't know anything—nobody knows anything. [*By the door.*] What are you staring at? Natasha has got a little affair on with Protopopov, and you don't see it. [*IRINA goes behind screen. TUSENBACH asleep on chair to right.*] . . . You sit here and see nothing, while Natasha has a little affair on with Protopopov. . . . [*Sings.*] May I offer you this date? . . . [*Goes out.*]

VERSHININ. [*Laughs.*] How very queer it all is, really! [*A pause.*] When the fire began I ran home as fast as I could. I went up and saw our house was safe and sound and out of danger, but my little girls were standing in the doorway in their nightgowns; their mother was nowhere to be seen, people were bustling about, horses and dogs were running about, [*Rises, crosses left.*] and my children's faces were full of alarm, horror, entreaty, and I don't know what; it wrung my heart to see their faces. My God, I thought, what more have these children to go through in the long years to come! I took their hands and ran along with them, and could think of nothing else but what more they would have to go through in this world! [*A pause.*] When I came to your house I found their mother here, screaming, angry.

[*MASHA² comes in with the pillow and sits down on the sofa.*] And while my little girls were standing in the doorway in their nightgowns and the street was red with the fire, and there was a fearful noise, [*OLGA crosses to right of MASHA's couch.*] I thought that something like it used to happen years ago when the enemy would suddenly make a raid and begin plundering and burning. . . . And yet, in reality, what

a difference there is between what is now and has been in the past! And when a little more time has passed—another two or three hundred years—people will look at our present manner of life with horror and derision, and everything of today will seem awkward and heavy, and very strange and uncomfortable. Oh, what a wonderful life that will be—what a wonderful life! [*Laughs.*] Forgive me, here I am airing my theories again! Allow me to go on. I have such a desire to talk about the future. I am in the mood. [*Walks about again. A pause.*] It's as though everyone were asleep. And so, I say, what a wonderful life it will be! Can you only imagine? . . . Here there are only three of your sort in the town now, but in generations to come there will be more and more and more; and the time will come when everything will be changed and be as you would have it; they will live in your way, and later on you too will be out of date—people will be born who will be better than you. . . . [*Laughs.*] I am in such a strange state of mind today. I have a fiendish longing for life. . . . [*Sings.*] Young and old are bound by love, [*Crosses to MASHA's sofa, back of it.*] and precious are its pangs. . . . [*Laughs.*]

MASHA. Tram-tam-tam! [*As on a guitar.*]

VERSHININ. Tam-tam!

MASHA. Tra-ra-ra?

VERSHININ. [*R. of her.*] Tra-ta-ta! [*Laughs.*]

[*Enter FEDOTIK.*]

FEDOTIK. [*Dances.*] Burnt to ashes! Burnt to ashes! Everything I had in the world.

[*Laughter.*]

IRINA. [*Crosses from behind screen.*] A queer thing to joke about. Is everything burnt?

FEDOTIK. [*Laughs.*] Everything I had in the world. Nothing is left. My guitar is burnt, and the camera and all my letters. . . . and the notebook I meant to give you. [*Crosses to IRINA.*] that's burnt too.

[*Enter SOLYONY R. smoking.*]

IRINA. No, please go, Vassily Vassilyevitch. You can't stay here.

SOLYONY. How is it the Baron can be here and I can't?

VERSHININ. We must be going, really. How is the fire?

SOLYONY. They say it is dying down. No, I really can't understand why the Baron may be here and not I. [*Takes out a bottle of scent and sprinkles himself.*]

VERSHININ. [*R. of Masha.*] Tram-tam-tam!

MASHA. Tram-tam!

VERSHININ. [*Laughs to SOLYONY.* VERSHININ and SOLYONY cross.] Let's go into the dining-room. [*Cross arm in arm.*]

SOLYONY. Very well; we'll make a note of it. I might explain my meaning further, but fear I may provoke the geese . . . [*Looking at TUSENBACH.*] Chook, chook, chook!

[*Goes out with VERSHININ and FEDOTIK.*]

IRINA. How that horrid Solyony has made the room smell of tobacco! [*In surprise.*] The Baron is asleep! Baron, Baron!

TUSENBACH. [*Waking up.*] I'm tired, though. . . . The brickyard, [*IRINA sits on stool R. C.*] I am not talking in my sleep. I really am going to the brickyard directly, to begin work. . . . It's nearly settled. [*To IRINA, tenderly.*] You are so pale and lovely and fascinating. . . . It seems to me as though your paleness sheds a light through the dark air. . . . You are melancholy; you are dissatisfied with life. . . . Ah, come with me; let us go and work together!

MASHA. Nikolay Lvovitch, do go!

TUSENBACH. [*Laughing.*] Are you here? I didn't see you. . . . [*Kisses IRINA's hand.*] Good-bye, I am going. . . . I look at you now, and I remember as though it were long ago how on your name-day you talked of the joy of work, and were so gay and confident. . . . And what a happy life I was dreaming of then! What has become of it? [*Kisses her hand.*] You are crying. Go to bed, it's getting light . . . It is nearly morning. . . . If it were granted to me to give my life for you!

MASHA. Nikolay Lvovitch, do go! Come, really. . . .

TUSENBACH. I am going. [*Goes out R.*]

MASHA. [*Lying down.*] Are you asleep, Fyodor?

KULIGIN. Eh?

MASHA. You had better go home.

KULIGIN. My darling Masha, my precious girl! . . .

IRINA. She is tired out. Let her rest, Fedya.

KULIGIN. [*Crosses to her puts hands on her shoulders.*] I'll go

at once . . . My dear, charming wife! . . . I love you, my only one! . . .

MASHA. [*Angrily.*] *Amo, amas, amat; amamus, amatis, amant.*

KULIGIN. [*Laughs.*] Yes, really she is wonderful. You have been my wife for seven years, and it seems to me as though we were only married yesterday. Honour bright! Yes, really you are a wonderful woman! I am content, I am content, I am content! [*Crosses C.*]

MASHA. I am bored, I am bored, I am bored! . . . [*Gets up and speaks.*] And there's something I can't get out of my head. . . . It's simply revolting. It sticks in my head like a nail. I must speak of it. I mean about Andrey. . . . He has mortgaged this house and his wife has grabbed all the money, and you know the house does not belong to him alone, but to us four! He ought to know that, if he is a decent man.

KULIGIN. Why do you want to bother about it, Masha? What is it to you? Andryusha is in debt all around, so there it is.

MASHA. It's revolting, anyway. [*Sits end of couch. Lies down.*]

KULIGIN. We are not poor. I work—I go to the high-school, and then I give private lessons. . . . I do my duty. . . . There's no nonsense about me. *Omnia mea mecum porto*, as the saying is.

MASHA. I want nothing, but it's the injustice that revolts me. [*A pause. KULIGIN crosses to her, pats her.*] Go, Fyodor.

KULIGIN. [*Kisses her.*] You are tired, rest for half an hour, and I'll sit and wait for you. . . . Sleep. . . . [*Goes.*] I am content, I am content, I am content. [*Goes out.*]

IRINA. [*At chiffonier.*] Yes, how petty our Andrey has grown, how dull and old he has become beside that woman! At one time he was working to get a professorship and yesterday he was boasting of having succeeded at last in becoming a member of the Rural Board. He is a member, and Protopopov is chairman. . . . This whole town is laughing and talking of it and he is the only one who sees and knows nothing. . . . And here everyone has been running to the fire while he sits still in his room and takes no notice. He does nothing but play his violin. . . . [*Nervously.*] Oh, it's awful, awful, awful! [*Weeps.*] I can't bear it any more, I can't! I can't, I can't! [*OLGA comes in and begins tidying up her table. Sobs*

loudly.] Turn me out, turn me out, I can't bear it any more!
OLGA. [*Alarmed.*] What is it? What is it, darling?

IRINA. [*Sobbing.*] Where? Where has it all gone? Where is it?
Oh, my God, my God! I have forgotten everything, everything . . . everything is a tangle in my mind . . . I don't remember the Italian for window or ceiling. . . . I am forgetting everything, every day I forget something more and life is slipping away and will never come back, we shall never, never go to Moscow. . . . I see that we shan't go. . . .

OLGA. [*Sits on bed.*] Darling, darling. . . .

IRINA. [*Restraining herself.*] Oh, I am wretched. . . . I can't work, I am not going to work. I have had enough of it, enough of it! I have been a telegraph clerk and now I have a job in the town council and I hate and despise every bit of the work they give me. . . . I am nearly twenty-four, I have been working for years, my brains are drying up, I am getting thin and old and ugly and there is nothing, nothing, not the slightest satisfaction, and time is passing and one feels that one is moving away from a real, fine life, moving farther and farther away and being drawn into the depths. I am in despair and I don't know how it is I am alive and have not killed myself yet. . . . [*Her head on OLGA's lap.*]

OLGA. Don't cry, my child, don't cry. It makes me miserable.

IRINA. I am not crying, I am not crying. . . . It's over. . . .
There, I am not crying now. I won't . . . I won't. . . .

OLGA. Darling, I am speaking to you as a sister, as a friend, if you care for my advice, marry the Baron! [*IRINA weeps.*]
[*Softly.*] You know you respect him, you think highly of him. . . . It's true he is ugly, but he is such a thoroughly nice man, so good. . . . One doesn't marry for love, but to do one's duty. . . . That's what I think, anyway, and I would marry without love. Whoever proposed to me I would marry him, if only he were a good man . . . I would even marry an old man. . . .

IRINA. [*Head on OLGA's lap facing audience.*] I kept expecting we should move to Moscow and there I should meet my real one. I've been dreaming of him, loving him. . . . But it seems that was all nonsense, nonsense. . . .

OLGA. [*Puts her arm round her sister.*] My darling, lovely sis-

ter, I understand it all; when the Baron left the army and came to us in a plain coat, I thought he looked so ugly that it positively made me cry. . . . He asked me, "Why are you crying?" How could I tell him! But if God brought you together I should be happy. That's a different thing you know, quite different.

[NATASHA with a candle in her hand walks across the stage from door on right to door on L. without speaking.]

MASHA. [*Sits up.*] She walks as though it were she had set fire to the town.

OLGA. Masha, you are silly. The very silliest of the family, that's you. [*Rise.*] Please forgive me. [*Crosses behind screen.*]

[*A pause.*]

MASHA. [*On couch.*] I want to confess my sins, dear sisters. My soul is yearning. I am going to confess to you and never again to anyone. . . . I'll tell you this minute. [*Softly.*] It's my secret, but you must know everything. . . . I can't be silent. . . . [*A pause.*] I am in love, I am in love. . . . I love that man. . . . You have just seen him. . . . Well, I may as well say it straight out. I love Vershinin.

OLGA. [*Goes behind her screen.*] Leave off. I don't hear anyway.

MASHA. But what am I to do? [*Clutches her head.*] At first I thought him queer . . . then I was sorry for him . . . then I came to love him . . . to love him with his voice, his words, his misfortunes, his two little girls. . . .

OLGA. [*Behind the screen.*] I don't hear you anyway. Whatever silly things you say I shan't hear them.

MASHA. Oh, Olga, you are silly. I love him—so that's my fate. It means that that's my lot. . . . And he loves me . . . It's all dreadful. Yes? Is it wrong? [*IRINA crosses to her.*] [*Takes IRINA by the hand and draws her to herself.*] Oh, my darling. . . . How are we going to live our lives, what will become of us? . . . When one reads a novel it all seems stale and easy to understand, but when you are in love yourself you see that no one knows anything and we all have to settle things for ourselves. . . . My darling, my sister. . . . I have confessed it to you, now I'll hold my tongue. . . . I'll be like Gogol's madman . . . silence . . . silence. . . .

[Enter ANDREY and after him FERAPONT.]

ANDREY. [Off stage. *Angrily.*] What do you want? I can't make it out.

FERAPONT. [In the doorway, *impatiently.*] I've told you ten times already, Andrey Sergeyevitch.

ANDREY. [L. C.] In the first place, I am not Andrey Sergeyevitch, to you, but your Honour.

FERAPONT. The firemen ask leave, your Honour, to go through the garden on their way to the river. Or else they have to go round and round, an awful nuisance for them.

ANDREY. Very good. Tell them, very good. [FERAPONT goes out.] I am sick of them. Where is Olga? [OLGA comes from behind the screen.] I've come to ask you for the key of the cupboard, I have lost mine. You've got one, it's a little key.

[OLGA gives him the key in silence; and sits on her bed; IRINA goes behind her screen; a pause.]

ANDREY. What a tremendous fire! Now it's begun to die down. Hang it all, that Ferapont made me so cross I said something silly to him. Your Honour. . . . [A pause.] Why don't you speak, Olga? [She looks at him. A pause.] It's time to drop this foolishness and sulking all about nothing. . . . You are here, Masha, and you too, Irina—very well, then, let us have things out thoroughly, once for all. What have you against me? What is it?

OLGA. [Rises and prepares bed.] Leave off, Andryusha. Let us talk tomorrow. [Nervously.] What an agonizing night!

ANDREY. [Greatly confused.] Don't excite yourself. I ask you coolly, what have you against me? Tell me straight out.

[VERSHININ'S voice: "Tram-tam-tam!"]

MASHA. [Standing up, loudly.] Tra-ta-ta! [To OLGA.] Good-night, Olga, God bless you . . . Goodnight Irina.

IRINA. Goodnight.

MASHA. Sleep well. . . . Goodnight, Andrey. You'd better leave them now, they are tired out. . . . You can go into things tomorrow. [Goes out R.]

OLGA. Yes, really, Andryusha, let us put it off till tomorrow. . . . It's time we were in bed.

ANDREY. [R. C.] I'll say what I have to say and then go. . . . First, you have something against Natasha, my wife, and

I've noticed that from the very day of my marriage. Natasha is a splendid woman, conscientious, straightforward and honourable—that's my opinion! I love and respect my wife, do you understand? I respect her, and I insist on other people respecting her too. I repeat, she is a conscientious, honourable woman, and all your disagreements are simply caprice, or rather the whims of old maids. Old maids never like and never have liked their sisters-in-law—that's the rule. [*A pause.*] Secondly, you seem to be cross with me for not being a professor, not working at something learned. But I am in the service of the Zemstvo, I am a member of the Rural Board, and I consider this service just as sacred and elevated as the service of learning. I am a member of the Rural Board and I am proud of it, if you care to know. . . . [*A pause. Walks back and forth, stops L. C.*] Thirdly . . . there's something else I have to say. . . . I have mortgaged the house without asking your permission. . . . For that I am to blame, yes, and I ask your pardon for it. I was driven to it by my debts . . . thirty-five thousand. . . . I am not gambling now—gave up cards long ago; but the chief thing I can say in self-defense is that you are of the privileged sex—you get a pension . . . while I had not . . . my wages, so to speak. . . . [*A pause.*]

KULIGIN. [*At the door.*] Isn't Masha here? [*Perturbed.*] Where is she? It's strange. [*Goes out.*]

ANDREY. They won't listen. Natasha is an excellent, conscientious woman. [*Paces up and down the stage in silence, then stops.*] When I married her, I thought we should be happy . . . happy, all of us. . . . But, my God! [*Weeps.*] Dear sisters, darling sisters, you must not believe what I say, you mustn't believe it. . . . [*Goes out.*]

KULIGIN. [*At the door, uneasily.*] Where is Masha? Isn't Masha here? How strange. [*Goes out.*]

[*The fire bell rings in the street. The stage is empty.*]

IRINA. [*Behind the screen.*] Olga! who is that knocking on the floor!

OLGA. It's the doctor, Ivan Romanitch. He is drunk.

IRINA. What a troubled night! [*A pause.*] Olga!

OLGA. Eh?

IRINA. Have you heard? The brigade is going to be taken away; they are being transferred to some place very far off.

OLGA. That's only a rumour.

IRINA. Then we shall be alone . . . Olga!

OLGA. Well?

IRINA. My dear, my darling, I respect the Baron, I think highly of him, I think highly of him, he is a fine man—I will marry him, I consent, only let us go to Moscow! I entreat you, do let us go! There's nothing in the world better than Moscow! Let us go, Olga! Please let us go!

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

Old garden of the PROZOROVs' house. A long avenue of fir trees, at the end of which is a view of the river. On the further side of the river there is a wood. On the right the verandah of the house; on the table in it are bottle and glasses; evidently they have just been drinking champagne. It is twelve o'clock in the day. People pass occasionally from the street across the garden to the river; five soldiers pass rapidly.

TCHEBUTYKIN, *on bench, in an affable mood, which persists throughout the act, is sitting in an easy-chair in the garden, waiting to be summoned; he is wearing a military cap and has a stick.* IRINA, KULIGIN *on porch swing with a decoration on his breast and with no moustache, and TUSENBACH, standing on the verandah, are saying good-bye to FEDOTIK and RODDEY, who are going down the steps; both officers are in marching uniform.*

TUSENBACH. [*C. on steps crosses to FEDOTIK and back. Kissing FEDOTIK.*] You are a good fellow; we've got on so happily together. [*Kisses RODDEY.*] Once more . . . Good-bye, my dear boy. . . .

IRINA. [*R. C. of TUSENBACH. RODDEY on L. of TUSENBACH.*] Till we meet again!

FEDOTIK. No, it's good-bye for good; we shall never meet again.

KULIGIN. [*R. of porch.*] Who knows! [*Wipes his eyes, smiles.*] Here I am crying too.

IRINA. We shall meet some day.

FEDOTIK. In ten years, or fifteen perhaps? But then we shall scarcely recognize each other—we shall greet each other coldly . . . [*Takes a snapshot.*] Stand still. . . . Once more, for the last time.

RODDEY. [*Embraces TUSENBACH.*] We shall not see each other again . . . [*Kisses IRINA's hand.*] Thank you for everything, everything. . . .

FEDOTIK. [*Crosses to C. pulls RODDEY away. With vexation.*]
Oh, do wait!

TUSENBACH. Please God we shall meet again. Write to us. Be sure to write to us.

RODDEY. [*Crosses L. Taking a long look at the garden.*] Good-bye, trees! [*Shouts.*] Halloo! [*A pause.*] Good-bye, echo!

KULIGIN. I shouldn't wonder if you get married in Poland. . . . Your Polish wife will clasp you in her arms and call you *kochany!* [*Laughs.*]

FEDOTIK. [*Looking at his watch.*] We have less than an hour. Of our battery only Solyony is going on the barge; we are going with the rank and file. Three divisions of the battery are going to-day and three more to-morrow—and peace and quiet will descend upon the town.

TUSENBACH. [*Sits on wall.*] And dreadful boredom too.

RODDEY. And where is Marya Sergeyevna?

KULIGIN. Masha is in the garden.

FEDOTIK. [*Crosses L.*] We must say good-bye to her.

RODDEY. [*To TUSENBACH.*] Good-bye. We must go, or I shall begin to cry . . . [*Hurriedly embraces TUSENBACH and KULIGIN and kisses IRINA's hand. Crosses L. C.*] We've had a splendid time here.

FEDOTIK. [*Crosses to KULIGIN.*] This is a little souvenir for you . . . a notebook with a pencil. . . . We'll go down here to the river . . . [*As they go away both look back.*]

KULIGIN. [*Shouts.*] Good-bye!

[*RODDEY and FEDOTIK meet MASHA in the background and say good-bye to her; she walks away with them. Exit at gate L.*]

IRINA. They've gone . . . [*Sits down on the bottom step of the verandah.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. They have forgotten to say good-bye to me.

IRINA. [*Sits on stool opposite TCHEBUTYKIN.*] And what were you thinking about?

TCHEBUTYKIN.¹ Why, I somehow forgot, too. But I shall see them again soon, I am setting off to-morrow. Yes . . . I have one day more. In a year I shall be on the retired list. Then I shall come here again and shall spend the rest of my life near you. . . . There is only one year now before I get my pension. [*Puts newspaper into his pocket and takes out*

another.] I shall come here to you and arrange my life quite differently. . . . I shall become such a quiet . . . God-fearing . . . well-behaved person.

IRINA. Well, you do need to arrange your life differently, dear Ivan Romanitch. You certainly ought to somehow.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Yes, I feel it. [*Softly hums.*] "Tarara-boom-dee-ay."

KULIGIN. Ivan Romanitch is incorrigible! Incorrigible!

TCHEBUTYKIN. You ought to take me in hand. Then I should reform.

IRINA. Fyodor has shaved off his moustache, I can't bear to look at him!

KULIGIN. Why, what's wrong?

TCHEBUTYKIN. I might tell you what your countenance looks like now, but I really can't.

KULIGIN. Well! It's the thing now, *modus vivendi*. Our head-master is clean-shaven and now I am second to him I have taken to shaving too. Nobody likes it, but I don't care. I am content. With moustache or without moustache I am equally content. [*Sits down.*]

[*In the background ANDREY is wheeling a baby asleep in a perambulator; from U. C. crosses down and crosses D. L.*]

IRINA. Ivan Romanitch, darling, I am dreadfully uneasy. You were on the boulevard yesterday, tell me what was it that happened?

TCHEBUTYKIN. What happened? Nothing. Nothing much. [*Reads the newspaper.*] It doesn't matter!

KULIGIN. The story is that Solyony and the Baron met yesterday on the boulevard near the theatre . . .

TUSENBACH. Oh, stop it! Really . . . [*With a wave of his hand, walks away into the house.*]

KULIGIN. [*C. leans against pillar.*] Near the theatre . . . Solyony began pestering the Baron and he couldn't keep his temper and said something offensive. . . .

TCHEBUTYKIN. I don't know. It's all nonsense.

KULIGIN. [*Laughs.*] A teacher at a divinity school wrote "nonsense" at the bottom of an essay and the pupil puzzled over it, thinking it was a Latin word . . . [*Laughs.*] It was fearfully funny. [TCHEBUTYKIN "*Ha! Ha!*"] . . . They say

Solyony is in love with Irina and hates the Baron. . . .

That's natural. Irina is a very nice girl.

[*From the background behind the scenes, "Aa-oo! Halloo!"*]

IRINA. [*Starts.*] Everything frightens me somehow today. [*A pause.*] All my things are ready, after dinner I shall send off my luggage. The Baron and I are to be married tomorrow, tomorrow we go to the brickyard and the day after that I shall be in the school. A new life is beginning. God will help me! How will it fare with me? When I passed my exam. as a teacher I felt so happy, so blissful, that I cried . . .

[*A pause.*] The car will soon be coming for my things. . . .

KULIGIN. That's all very well, but it does not seem serious. It's all nothing but ideas and very little that is serious. However, I wish you success with all my heart.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Moved to tenderness.*] My good, delightful darling. . . . My heart of gold. . . .

KULIGIN. Well, today the officers will be gone and everything will go on in the old way. Whatever people may say Masha is a true, good woman. I love her dearly and am thankful for my lot! . . . People have different lots in life . . . There is a man called Kozyrev serving in the Excise here. He was at school with me, but he was expelled from the fifth form because he could never understand *ut consecutivum*. Now he is frightfully poor and ill, and when I meet him I say, "How are you, *ut consecutivum*?" "Yes," he says, "just so—*consecutivum*" . . . and then he coughs. . . . Now I have always been successful, I am fortunate, I have even got the order of the Stanislav of the second degree and I am teaching others that *ut consecutivum*. Of course I am clever, cleverer than very many people, but happiness does not lie in that . . . [*A pause.*]

[*In the house the "Maiden's Prayer" is played on the piano.*]

IRINA. Tomorrow evening I shall not be hearing that "Maiden's Prayer," I shan't be meeting Protopopov . . . He's sitting there in the drawing-room; he has come again today. . . .

KULIGIN. The head-mistress hasn't come yet?

IRINA. [*KULIGIN sits again.*] No. They have sent for her. If only you knew how hard it is for me to live here alone, without Olga. . . . Now that she is head-mistress and lives at

the high-school and is busy all day long, I am alone, I am bored. I have nothing to do, and I hate the room I live in. . . . I have made up my mind, since I am not fated to be in Moscow, that so it must be. It must be destiny. There is no help for it. . . . It's all in God's hands, that's the truth. When Nikolay Lvovitch made me an offer again . . . I thought it over and made up my mind. . . . He is a good man, it's wonderful really how good he is. . . . And I suddenly felt as though my soul had grown wings, my heart felt so light and again I longed for work, work. . . . Only something happened yesterday, there is some mystery hanging over me.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Nonsense.

NATASHA. [*At the window.*] Our head-mistress!

KULIGIN. The head-mistress has come. Let us go in. [*Goes into the house with IRINA.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Feet on stool. Reads the newspaper, humming softly.*] "Tarara-boom-dee-ay."

[*MASHA approaches; in the background ANDREY is pushing the perambulator.*]

MASHA. Here he sits, snug and settled.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Well, what then?

MASHA. [*Sits down.*] Nothing . . . [*Crosses L. C., sits on steps. A pause.*] Did you love my mother?

TCHEBUTYKIN. Very much.

MASHA. And did she love you?

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*After a pause.*] That I don't remember.

MASHA. Is my man here? It's just like our cook Marfa used to say about her policeman: "is my man here?"

TCHEBUTYKIN. Not yet.

MASHA. When you get happiness by snatches, by little bits, and then lose it, as I am losing it, by degrees one grows coarse and spiteful . . . [*Points to her bosom.*] I'm boiling here inside . . . [*Looking at ANDREY, who is pushing the perambulator.*] Here is our Andrey. . . . All our hopes are shattered. Thousands of people raised the bell, a lot of money and of labour was spent on it, and it suddenly fell and smashed. All at once, for no reason whatever. That's just how it is with Andrey. . . .

ANDREY. When will they be quiet in the house? There is such a noise.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Soon. [*Looks at his watch.*] My watch is an old-fashioned one with a repeater . . . [*Winds his watch, it strikes.*] The first, the second, and the fifth batteries are going at one o'clock. [*A pause.*] And I am going tomorrow.

ANDREY. [*By TCHEBUTYKIN.*] For good?

TCHEBUTYKIN. I don't know. Perhaps I shall come back in a year. Though the devil knows. . . . It doesn't matter one way or another.

[*There is the sound of a harp and violin being played far away in the street.*]

ANDREY. The town will be empty. It's as though one put an extinguisher over it. [*A pause.*] Something happened yesterday near the theatre; everyone is talking of it, and I know nothing about it.

TCHEBUTYKIN. It was nothing. Foolishness. Solyony began annoying the Baron and he lost his temper and insulted him, and it came in the end to Solyony's having to challenge him. [*Looks at his watch.*] It's time, I fancy. . . . It was to be at half-past twelve in the Crown forest that we can see from here beyond the river . . . Piff-paff! [*Laughs.*] Solyony imagines he is a Lermontov and even writes verses. Joking apart, this is his third duel.

MASHA. Whose?

TCHEBUTYKIN. Solyony's.

MASHA. And the Baron's?

TCHEBUTYKIN. What about the Baron?

[*A pause.*]

MASHA. My thoughts are in a muddle. . . . Anyway, I tell you, you ought not to let them do it. He may wound the Baron or even kill him.

TCHEBUTYKIN. The Baron is a very good fellow, but one Baron more or less in the world, what does it matter? Let them! It doesn't matter. [*Beyond the garden a shout of "Aa-oo! Halloo!"*] You can wait. That is Skvortsov, the second, shouting. He is in a boat.

[*A pause.*]

ANDREY. In my opinion to take part in a duel, or to be present

at it even in the capacity of a doctor, is simply immoral. TCHEBUTYKIN. That only seems so. . . . We are not real, nothing in the world is real, we don't exist, but only seem to exist. . . . Nothing matters!

MASHA. [*Crosses R. and back to C.*] How they keep on talking, talking all day long. [*Goes.*] To live in such a climate, it may snow any minute, and then all this talk on the top of it. [*Stops.*] I am not going indoors, I can't go in there. . . . When Vershinin comes, tell me . . . [*Goes down the avenue L.*] And the birds are already flying south . . . [*Looks up.*] Swans or geese. . . . Darlings, happy things. . . . [*Goes out.*]

ANDREY. Our house will be empty. The officers are going, you are going, Irina is getting married, and I shall be left in the house alone.

TCHEBUTYKIN. What about your wife?

ANDREY. [*Wheels perambulator to and fro in front of house.*] A wife is a wife. She is a straightforward, upright woman, good-natured, perhaps, but for all that there is something in her which makes her no better than some petty, blind animal. Anyway she is not a human being. I speak to you as to a friend, the one man to whom I can open my soul. I love Natasha, that is so, but sometimes she seems to me wonderfully vulgar, and then I don't know what to think, I can't account for my loving her so, anyway, having loved her.

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Gets up.*] I am going away tomorrow, my boy, perhaps we shall never meet again, so this is my advice to you. Put on your cap, take your stick and walk off . . . walk off and just go, go without looking back. And the further you go, the better. [*A pause.*] But do as you like! It doesn't matter. . . .

[SOLYONY *crosses the stage in the background; seeing TCHEBUTYKIN he turns towards him walks up L.*]

SOLYONY. [*L. C.*] Doctor, it's time! It's half-past twelve. [*Greets ANDREY.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. Directly. I am sick of you all. [SOLYONY *crosses C. to ANDREY.*] If anyone asks for me, Andryusha, say I'll be back directly . . . [*Sighs, crosses up L.*] Oho-ho-ho!

SOLYONY. He had not time to say alack before the bear was

on his back. [TCHEBUTYKIN *crosses to SOLYONY. Walks away with the doctor.*] Why are you croaking, old man?

TCHEBUTYKIN. Come!

SOLYONY. How do you feel?

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*Angrily.*] Like a pig in clover.

SOLYONY. The old chap need not excite himself. I won't do anything much, I'll only shoot him like a snipe. [*Takes out scent and sprinkles his hands.*] I've used a whole bottle today, and still they smell. My hands smell like a corpse. [*A pause.*]

Yes. . . . Do you remember the poem? "And, restless, seeks the stormy ocean, as though in tempest there were peace."

TCHEBUTYKIN. Yes. He had not time to say alack before the bear was on his back. [*Goes out with SOLYONY. L. at gate.*] [*Shouts are heard: "Halloo! Oo-oo!" ANDREY and FERAPONT come in.*]

FERAPONT. Papers for you to sign. . . .

ANDREY. [*Nervously.*] Let me alone! Let me alone! I entreat you! [*Walks away with the perambulator.*]

FERAPONT. That's what the papers are for—to be signed. [*Crosses to L. Retires into the background.*]

[*Enter IRINA, and TUSENBACH wearing a straw hat; KULIGIN crosses the stage shouting "Aa-oo, MASHA, aa-oo!"*]

TUSENBACH. I believe that's the only man in the town who is glad that the officers are going away.

IRINA. [*Sitting on wall of porch L. C.*] That's very natural. [*A pause.*] Our town will be empty now.

TUSENBACH. [*Crosses L. C.*] Dear, I'll be back directly.

IRINA. Where are you going?

TUSENBACH. I must go into the town, and then . . . to see my comrades off. [*Crossing L.*]

IRINA. That's not true. . . . Nikolay, why are you so absent-minded today? [*A pause.*] What happened yesterday near the theatre?

TUSENBACH. [*With a gesture of impatience.*] I'll be here in an hour and with you again. [*Crossing to her kisses her hands.*] My beautiful one . . . [*Looks into her face.*] For five years now I have loved you and still I can't get used to it, and you seem to me more and more lovely. What wonderful, exquisite hair! What eyes! I shall carry you off tomorrow,

we will work, we will be rich, my dreams will come true. You shall be happy. There is only one thing, one thing: you don't love me!

IRINA. That's not in my power! I'll be your wife and be faithful and obedient, but there is no love, I can't help it. [*Weeps.*] I've never been in love in my life! Oh, I have so dreamed of love, I've been dreaming of it for years, day and night, but my soul is like a wonderful piano of which the key has been lost. [*A pause.*] You look uneasy.

TUSENBACH. I have not slept all night. There has never been anything in my life so dreadful that it could frighten me, and only that lost key frets at my heart and won't let me sleep. . . . Say something to me . . . [*A pause.*] Say something to me. . . .

IRINA. What? What am I to say to you? What?

TUSENBACH. Anything.

IRINA. There, there! [*A pause.*]

TUSENBACH. What trifles, what little things suddenly *apropos* of nothing acquire importance in life! One laughs at them as before, thinks them nonsense, but still one goes on and feels that one has not the power to stop. Don't let us talk about it! I am happy. [*Leans against pillar.*] I feel as though I were seeing these pines, these maples, these birch-trees for the first time in my life, and they all seem to be looking at me with curiosity and waiting. What beautiful trees, and, really, how beautiful life ought to be under them! [*A shout of "Halloo! Aa-oo!"*] I must be off; it's time. . . . See, that tree is dead, but it waves in the wind with the others. And so it seems to me that if I die I shall have part in life one way or another. Good-bye, my darling. . . [*A step L. Kisses her hands.*] Those papers of yours you gave me are lying under the calendar on my table.

IRINA. I am coming with you.

TUSENBACH. [*In alarm.*] No, no! [*Goes off quickly, stops in the avenue.*] Irina! [*Steps towards her.*]

IRINA. What is it?

TUSENBACH. [*Not knowing what to say.*] I didn't have any coffee this morning. Ask them to make me some. [*Goes out quickly.*]

[IRINA goes to wall left, leans on it. Stands lost in thought; then walks away into the background of the scene and sits down on the swing. Enter ANDREY with the perambulator, and FERAPONT comes into sight.]

FERAPONT. [L. C.] Andrey Sergeyevitch, the papers aren't mine; they are Government papers. I didn't invent them.

ANDREY.² [C.] Oh, where is it all gone? What has become of my past, when I was young, gay, and clever, when my dreams and thoughts were exquisite, when my present and my past were lighted up by hope? Why on the very threshold of life do we become dull, grey, uninteresting, lazy, indifferent, useless, unhappy? . . . Our town has been going on for two hundred years—there are a hundred thousand people living in it; and there is not one who is not like the rest, not one saint in the past, or the present, not one man of learning, not one artist, not one man in the least remarkable who could inspire envy or a passionate desire to imitate him. . . . They only eat, drink, sleep, and then die . . . others are born, and they also eat and vary their lives by nasty gossip, vodka, cards, litigation; and the wives deceive their husbands, and the husbands tell lies and pretend that they see and hear nothing, and an overwhelmingly vulgar influence weighs upon the children, and the divine spark is quenched in them and they become the same sort of pitiful, dead creatures, all exactly alike, as their fathers and mothers . . . [To FERAPONT, angrily.] What do you want?

FERAPONT. Eh? There are papers to sign.

ANDREY. [Crossing away from him to R. C.] You bother me!

FERAPONT. [Follows him—handing him the papers.] The porter from the local treasury was saying just now that there was as much as two hundred degrees of frost in Petersburg this winter.

ANDREY. The present is hateful, but when I think of the future, it is so nice! I feel so light-hearted, so free. A light dawns in the distance, I see freedom. I see how I and my children will become free from sloth, from kvass, from goose and cabbage, from sleeping after dinner, from mean, parasitic living. . . .

FERAPONT. He says that two thousand people were frozen to death. The people were terrified. It was either in Petersburg or Moscow, I don't remember.

ANDREY. [*In a rush of tender feeling.*] My dear sisters, my wonderful sisters! [*Through tears. Sits wall of house right.*] Masha, my sister!

NATASHA. [*In the window.*] Who is talking so loud out there? Is that you, Andryusha? You will wake baby Sophie. *Il ne faut pas faire de bruit, la Sophie est dormee déjà. Vous êtes un ours.* [*Getting angry.*] If you want to talk, give the perambulator with the baby to somebody else. Ferapont, take the perambulator from the master!

FERAPONT. Yes, ma'am. [*Takes the pram.*]

ANDREY. [*In confusion.*] I am talking quietly.

NATASHA. [*Petting her child, inside the room.*] Bobik! Naughty Bobik! Little rascal!

ANDREY. [*Looking through the papers.*] Very well, I'll look through them and sign what wants signing, and then you can take them back to the Board. [*Goes in the house reading the papers; FERAPONT pushes the pram further into the garden up left back of house.*]

NATASHA. [*Speaking indoors.*] Bobik, what is mamma's name? Darling, darling! And who is this? This is auntie Olga. Say to auntie, "Good morning, Olga!"

[*Two wandering MUSICIANS, a man and a girl, enter and play a violin and a harp; from the house enter VERSHININ with OLGA and ANFISA, and stand for a minute listening in silence; IRINA comes up, is still by the wall.*]

OLGA. Our garden is like a public passage; they walk and ride through. Nurse, give those people something. [*Sits on wall on R. of house.*]

ANFISA. [*Gives money to the musicians.*] Go away, and God bless you, my dear souls! [*The MUSICIANS bow and go away above house L.*] Poor things. People don't play if they have plenty to eat. [*To IRINA. Cross IRINA, crossing to L. C. ANFISA is on her right, VERSHININ and OLGA are on porch.*] Good morning, Irisha! [*Kisses her.*] Aye, aye, my little girl, I am having a time of it! Living in the high-school, in a gov-

ernment flat, with dear Olga—that's what the Lord has vouchsafed me in my old age! I have never lived so well in my life, sinful woman that I am. . . . It's a big flat, and I have a room to myself and a bedstead. All at the government expense. I wake up in the night and, O Lord, Mother of God, there is no one in the world happier than I!

VERSHININ. [*Looking at his watch.*] We are just going, Olga Sergeyevna. It's time to be off. [*A pause.*] I wish you everything, everything. . . . Where is Marya Sergeyevna?

IRINA. She is somewhere in the garden. . . . I'll go and look for her. [*Exits L. by gate.*]

VERSHININ. Please be so good. I am in a hurry.

ANFISA. I'll go and look for her too. [*Shouts.*] Mashenka, aa-oo! [*Goes with IRINA into the farther part of the garden.*] Aa-oo! Aa-oo!

VERSHININ. Everything comes to an end. Here we are parting. [*Looks at his watch.*] The town has given us something like a lunch; we have been drinking champagne, the mayor made a speech. I ate and listened, but my heart was here, with you all. . . . [*Looks round the garden.*] I've grown used to you. . . .

OLGA. Shall we ever see each other again?

VERSHININ. Most likely not. [*A pause.*] My wife and two little girls will stay here for another two months; please, if anything happens, if they need anything. . . .

OLGA. Yes, yes, of course. Set your mind at rest. [*A pause.*] By tomorrow there won't be a soldier in the town—it will all turn into a memory, and of course for us it will be like beginning a new life. . . . [*A pause.*] Nothing turns out as we would have it. I did not want to be a head-mistress, and yet I am. It seems we are not to live in Moscow. . . .

VERSHININ. [*They shake hands.*] Well. . . . Thank you for everything. . . . Forgive me if anything was amiss. . . . I have talked a great deal: forgive me for that too—don't remember evil against me.

OLGA. [*Wipes her eyes.*] Why doesn't Masha come?

VERSHININ. [*Crosses to left of porch and back to C. of it.*] What else am I to say to you at parting? What am I to theorize about? . . . [*Laughs.*] Life is hard. It seems to

many of us blank and hopeless; but yet we must admit that it goes on getting clearer and easier, and it looks as though the time were not far off when it will be full of happiness. [*Looks at his watch.*] It's time for me to go! In old days men were absorbed in wars, filling all their existence with marches, raids, victories, but now all that is a thing of the past, leaving behind it a great void which there is so far nothing to fill; humanity is searching for it passionately, and of course will find it. Ah, if only it could be quickly! [*A pause.*] If, don't you know, industry were united with culture and culture with industry. . . . [*Looks at his watch.*] But, I say, it's time for me to go. . . .

OLGA. Here she comes.

[*MASHA comes in from L.*]

VERSHININ. [*Crosses to her—OLGA turns away.*] I have come to say good-bye. . . .

[*OLGA moves a little away to leave them free to say good-bye.*]

MASHA. [*Looking into his face.*] Good-bye. . . . [*A prolonged kiss. MASHA sobs violently.*]

VERSHININ. Write to me. . . . Don't forget me! Let me go! . . . Time is up! . . . Olga Sergeyevna, take her, I must . . . go . . . I am late . . . [*Much moved, kisses OLGA's hands; then again embraces MASHA and quickly goes off through house.*]

OLGA. Come, Masha! Leave off, darling.

[*Enter KULIGIN through gate L.*]

KULIGIN. [*To MASHA embarrassed.*] Never mind, let her cry—let her. . . . My good Masha, my dear Masha! . . . You are my wife, and I am happy, anyway. . . . I don't complain; I don't say a word of blame. . . . Here Olga is my witness. . . . We'll begin the old life again, and I won't say one word, not a hint. . . .

MASHA. [*Restraining her sobs.*] By the sea-strand an oak-tree green. . . . Upon that oak a chain of gold. . . . Upon that oak a chain of gold. . . . I am going mad. . . . By the sea-strand . . . an oak-tree green. . . .

OLGA. Calm yourself, Masha. . . . Calm yourself. . . . Give her some water. [*KULIGIN gets water from table on porch.*]

MASHA. I am not crying now. . . .

KULIGIN. She is not crying now . . . she is good. . . .

MASHA. By the sea-strand an oak-tree green, upon that oak a chain of gold. . . . The oak is green. . . . I am mixing it up . . . [*Drinks water.*] My life is a failure. . . . I want nothing now. . . . I shall be calm directly. . . . It doesn't matter. . . . What does "strand" mean? Why do these words haunt me? My thoughts are in a tangle.

[*Enter IRINA from L.*]

OLGA. Calm yourself, Masha. Come, that's a good girl. Let us go indoors.

MASHA. [*Angrily.*] I am not going in. Let me alone! [*Sobs, but at once checks herself.*] I won't go into that house now. I won't.

IRINA. Let us sit together, even if we don't say anything. I am going away tomorrow, you know . . . [*A pause.*]

KULIGIN. [*R. C. below porch.*] I took a false beard and moustache from a boy in the third form yesterday, just look . . . [*Puts on the beard and moustache. OLGA crosses C. L. of KULIGIN.*] I look like the German teacher . . . [*Laughs.*] Don't I? Funny creatures, those boys.

MASHA. You really do look like the German teacher.

OLGA. [*Laughs.*] Yes. [*MASHA weeps.*]

IRINA. There, Masha!

KULIGIN. Awfully like . . .

[*Enter NATASHA from house.*]

NATASHA. [*To the maid.*] What? Mr. Protopopov will sit with Sophie, and let Andrey Sergeyevitch wheel Bobik up and down. [*Comes down steps.*] What a lot there is to do with children . . . [*To IRINA L. of her.*] Irina, you are going away tomorrow, what a pity. Do stay just another week. [*Seeing KULIGIN, utters a shriek; the latter laughs and takes off the beard and moustache.*] Well, what next, you gave me such a fright! [*To IRINA.*] I am used to you and do you suppose that I don't feel parting with you? I shall put Andrey with his violin into your room—let him saw away there!—and we will put baby Sophie in his room. Adorable, delightful baby! Isn't she a child! Today she looked at me with such eyes and said "Mamma!"

KULIGIN. A fine child, that's true.

NATASHA.³ So tomorrow I shall be all alone here. [*Sighs L. C., walks about.*] First of all I shall have this avenue of fir trees cut down, and then that maple. [*Steps down.*] It looks so ugly in the evening. . . . [*To IRINA.*] My dear, that sash does not suit you at all. . . . It's in bad taste. You want something light. And then I shall have flowers, flowers planted everywhere, and there will be such a scent. . . . [*Severely.*] Why is there a fork lying about on this seat. [*Picks up fork.*] I ask you? [*Shouts, crosses into house.*] Hold your tongue!

KULIGIN. She is at it! [*Behind the scenes the band plays a march; they all listen.*]

OLGA. They are going.

[*Enter TCHEBUTYKIN from L.*]

MASHA. Our people are going. Well . . . a happy journey to them! [*To her husband.*] We must go home. . . . Where are my hat and cape?

KULIGIN. I took them into the house. . . . I'll get them directly. . . .

OLGA. Yes, now we can go home, it's time.

TCHEBUTYKIN. Olga Sergeyevna!

OLGA. What is it? [*A pause.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. Nothing. . . . I don't know how to tell you. [*Whispers in her ear.*]

OLGA. [*In alarm.*] It can't be!

TCHEBUTYKIN. Yes . . . such a business. . . . I am so worried and worn out, I don't want to say another word. . . . [*With vexation.*] But there, it doesn't matter!

MASHA. What has happened?

OLGA. [*Puts her arms round IRINA.*] This is a terrible day. . . . I don't know how to tell you, my precious. . . .

IRINA. What is it? Tell me quickly, what is it? For God's sake! [*Cries.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN. The Baron has just been killed in a duel.

IRINA. [*Weeping quietly.*] I knew, I knew. . . .

TCHEBUTYKIN. [*In the background of the scene, sits down on a garden seat.*] I am worn out. . . . [*Takes a newspaper out of his pocket.*] Let them cry. . . . [*Sings softly.*] "Tarara-boom-dee-ay" . . . It doesn't matter.

MASHA.⁴ Oh, listen to that band! They are going away from us; one has gone altogether, gone forever. We are left alone to begin our life over again. . . . We've got to live. . . . we've got to live. . . .

IRINA. [*Lays her head on OLGA's bosom.*] A time will come when everyone will know what all this is for, why there is this misery; there will be no mysteries, and, meanwhile, we have got to live . . . we have got to work, only to work! Tomorrow I shall go alone; I shall teach in the school, and I will give all my life to those to whom it may be of use. Now it's autumn; soon winter will come and cover us with snow, and I will work. I will work.

OLGA. [*Embraces both her sisters.*] The music is so gay, so confident, and one longs for life! O my God! Time will pass, and we shall go away for ever, and we shall be forgotten, our faces will be forgotten, our voices, and how many there were of us; but our sufferings will pass into joy for those who will live after us, happiness and peace will be established upon earth, and they will remember kindly and bless those who have lived before. Oh, dear sisters, our life is not ended yet. We shall live! The music is so gay, so joyful, and it seems as though a little more and we shall know what we are living for, why we are suffering. . . . If we only knew—if we only knew.

[*The music grows more and more subdued; KULIGIN, cheerful and smiling, brings the hat and cape; ANDREY pushes the perambulator in which BOBIK is sitting.*]

TCHEBUTYKIN [*Humming softly.*] "Tarara-boom-dee-ay!" [*Reads his paper.*] It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter.

OLGA. If we only knew, if we only knew!

SLOW CURTAIN

NOTES ON THE THREE SISTERS

BY EVA LE GALLIENNE

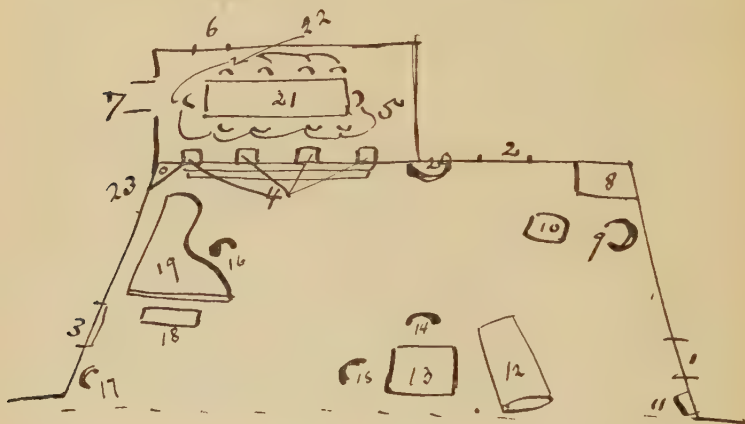
So much has been written about Chekhov's plays by learned translators and critics, that I, who am only an actor who loves them dearly, feel that I am treading on difficult ground.

Had I said to my fellow-workers when we started rehearsals of "The Three Sisters": "We must approach this play with awe. We must remember that it is a 'centrifugal' play and we must not fail to play it 'centripetally,'" I rather dread to think of what the result might have been. However, being neither a translator nor a learned critic, these words meant little to me, and I found myself face to face with the problem of interpreting a great play as faithfully and as truthfully and as reverently as possible.

It seems to me that "The Three Sisters"—and indeed almost every one of Chekhov's plays—is enormously difficult through its baffling simplicity. "The Three Sisters," in spite of its extraordinarily concealed technique, has little to do with the theatre in the ordinary *theatrical* sense. The characters live and breathe and suffer before our eyes, and one feels a guilty sense of eavesdropping.

Nothing was more encouraging to me than the grip that "The Three Sisters" took upon the New York public—that poor New York public which has become, so unjustly I feel, a butt for ridicule and contempt. I was told by many good friends and enemies that the New Yorker must have his story clearly told with a nice tidy ending, preferably happy, but, at a pinch, tragic; as long as it definitely *was* an ending and a solution. I was delighted then to find that "The Three Sisters" (certainly not one of Chekhov's easiest plays) was received with the great-

est enthusiasm. Some people whom it deeply and truly touched returned as many as eight and nine times; and those who came to the theatre merely for passing entertainment were gradually fascinated by the intense humanity and truth of this piece of life—for one cannot call it a story. They were resentful after the first act, interested after the second, thrilled after the third



Key to plan:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 door to hall. Main entrance | 12 sofa |
| 2 door to Andrey's room | 13 table |
| 3 window [one step up] | 14 } chairs |
| 4 columns [three steps up] | 15 { |
| 5 dining-room | 16 { |
| 6 window | 17 } |
| 7 door to other parts of the house | 18 piano bench or stool |
| 8 stove | 19 piano |
| 9 Tchebutykin's arm-chair | 20 "whatnot" with bric a brac |
| 10 foot-stool | 21 dining-table |
| 11 stand with plants and flowers | 22 chair round table |
| 23 ikon on three-cornered shelf with red light burning before it. There should be an embroidered cloth on shelf with ends hanging to either side. | |

and in tears after the fourth. They left the theatre with perhaps a baffled sense of having spent \$1.65 or 50c on nothing they could clearly recount to their neighbor the next day, but with something indefinable which had (oh great triumph in this age of machinery!) troubled them to the point of tears, and which they found it impossible quite to forget.

"The Three Sisters" is imbued with a "tragic sense of Life," as Unamino so beautifully puts it—a comic sense of life, a *poignant* sense of life. It embraces, in other words, life itself in all its phases—comic at the heights of tragedy, tragic at its gayest moments. It expresses the tenderness and compassion that hovers over humanity; and, in spite of every effort to banish such things, it excudes that common compassion that springs from a sense, however blindly felt, of mutual helplessness in the face of the Infinite, of mutual unimportance in the face of the centuries of all the brightness and all the suffering that human beings must experience in common till the end of time. It is based on joy and sorrow, ecstasy, agony, doubt, hope, fear, confidence—all the basic and immutable emotions that irrevocably and irrefutably make *men equal*.

ACT I

1. The play must not start on a gloomy note. The first speech, Olga's, is a series of broken thoughts that come while she is correcting exercise books. Entrance of groups must be natural; they must come in carrying on a very real and relevant conversation. All of these people are interested in their own trend of thought. We all are, of course, but some of us have been schooled into pretending to be interested in the other fellow. Some people are more honest—that is the only difference.
2. Masha must be sure to whistle something of the period or older. I used an old Gypsy song. She does not stop whistling at Olga's remonstrance; every now and then she goes on, perhaps unknowingly.
3. Irina must be youthful and happy, impatiently young; and

glad as someone who may be in tears the next minute is glad. It is hard for an Anglo-Saxon to understand that.

4. Care must be taken throughout the play never to handle lines as speeches, nor to be stilted and tiresome. Olga, for instance, is here thinking aloud. If her thought is interesting enough to necessitate a pause, she speaks interruptedly.
5. Solyony is a very difficult role. He is a miserably unhappy creature, lacking in coördination so that in life he can never do the thing that he wants to do. If he likes someone he is rude to him. He is always the antithesis of what he would really like to be and feels in his heart. He must be played very disagreeably, a real boor, but one must never forget the underlying tragedy of this unfortunate man.
6. These people should not be spick and span like most stage people. They must be dressed in clothes that look familiar and possible. Ivan Romanitch should have spots on his old uniform. They should not look smart or well-dressed because of the audience. They are people living their lives simply, not for effect.
7. Masha and sisters. Masha, having married a man who bores her, has become almost neurotic through ennui. Whereas if she had married a man whom she really loved and who interested her she would have been an agreeable and normal person. For this reason her moods swing tremendously from tears to laughter, from good temper to bad. I have always felt a close affinity between Masha and Irina, not outwardly (for most of the scenes are between Olga and Irina actually) but mentally and spiritually. This is the sort of understanding that need not be expressed in words. I feel that they seldom talk and yet they both know one another thoroughly. Olga seems to me to represent the even type of plodding human being, absorbed in some everyday occupation, rarely making flights into the fanciful. This may be due to the fact that she has been teaching school for many years and has been aggravated by all the petty elements of her life. Irina is youth, adolescence. I always see her with an upward look, full of ideals and dreams.
8. Vershinin is Chekhov's mouthpiece. He is really an eternal optimist who lives in his dream of a better life—not for him-

self but for those who will come afterward. He believes infinitely in the advance of humanity. One feels that it is this faith which nothing can kill in him that makes life possible. These dreams he has are an antidote for the drudgery of his domestic life, and it is this quality in him that captures Masha's imagination as she is in like circumstances. This role should be military but charming.

9. They join hands and dance in a circle around Andrey, Tusenbach at the piano playing a little tune. The girls sing, "Andreyusha is in love, Andreyusha is in love."
10. Vershinin. His philosophy of life. He manages to get through by thinking these things. Masha is fascinated not by him but by hope that perhaps he speaks truly.
11. Kuligin. He must not be made a clown. He is a good and kind man but a bore.
12. Masha shouldn't be afraid of being unsympathetic here. People are not always charming.
13. All during this scene there should be life in the dining-room, real life. I recommend conversation about relevant topics or situations—and not whispers—so that it forms a very definite pattern of sound against which the main theme, Irina and Tusenbach, is played.

ACT II

1. Now that Natasha has succeeded in marrying Andrey she is a very different person—at least in her outward expression. Her pose of shyness, diffidence, has completely disappeared and she bosses the whole household. Practical, selfish, both feet firmly on the ground, the three sisters are helpless against her direct line of thought. She made up her mind to marry Andrey which she did; later she determined to have Irina's room for the children and she succeeded in this. At the end of the play she has reached her goal of absolute supremacy in the house. Andrey, being a sensitive but weak man, having married a woman insensitive and strong—even vulgar, to whom he was only physically attracted, instead of

being able to raise her to his level throws up his hands and lets himself drift.

2. Scene Carnival night. Audience must get feeling that this happens continuously. The mood, at Natasha's whispered words, must break quickly from liveliness to quiet. Incidentally, when conversations are carried on aside from those heard by the audience, they *must* be on relevant topics, always in role.
3. The phrase "I am tired" which recurs frequently should be said simply and genuinely. It should never be used as a means for getting a laugh—of which there is great danger here in America where nobody is ever tired!
4. Natasha going for ride with Protopopov. In speech just preceding Natasha's exit, the audience should get the fact that Protopopov is making love to Natasha and she is not repelling his advances. This is the first time this theme is brought in.

ACT III

1. There should be, off stage, a certain amount of commotion, of unrest—people walking about, fire alarm, etc.
2. Masha and Vershinin. In Vershinin's look at Masha, the audience is given the first indication of love between them, and it must get the fact that it is already established, that they are joyous in it.
3. Masha's confession to Irina. This brings out again the fine understanding between Masha and Irina. Previous to the confession, when Olga is advising Irina to marry the Baron, Masha's silent disapproval should be felt. Olga, back of the screen, protests merely against hearing expressed what she already knows—that Masha and the Colonel are lovers.

ACT IV

1. Tchebutykin is on to himself. He sees and knows and understands everything; he realizes the futility of protest or refor-

mation. Though to him "Nothing matters, nothing really matters" he is not bitter but indifferently humorous.

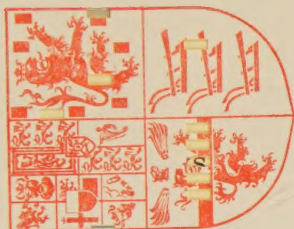
2. Andrey. This speech is vastly important. In it the complete character of Andrey, the disintegrating, deadening effect Natasha has worked on him, is evidenced. It is self-realization of a most tragic nature; it extends this realization to include all mankind. Andrey is left, through Natasha, completely broken.
3. Natasha. Natasha has reached the goal of her dreams; complete mistress of the house, she is bent on restoring new order, her order. She is, perhaps, the only "finished" character in the play—finished in the sense that she begins as an intruder, slowly works her straight vulgar way through difficulties, and emerges victor. Natasha leaves no question in your mind at the end of the play; she is established as the last curtain leaves her.
4. Last arrangement of "The Three Sisters" highly important, the physical detail of which epitomizes their respective characters. Olga sits on the highest step looking straight ahead. Irina sits on the next lower step head held high looking up, still hopeful, still young. Masha, devastated by her emotions, looks down.

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